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# THE ROMANCISTS


CHARLES DE BERNARD

GERFAUT

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

MILITONA

VOL. II



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## Chapter II

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*For every step forward taken by the man, the savage  
beast made a backward one.*

BIBLIOTHÈQUE  
DES CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE  
DU ROMAN  
CONTEMPORAIN

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*GERFAUT*

*VOLUME TWO*

CHARLES DE BERNARD

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*MILITONA*

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

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# GERFAUT

*( Continued )*



## XVIII

At the end of the avenue of plane-trees, the bank of the stream formed an escarpment like that upon which the château was built, but much steeper and partly wooded. To avoid this spot, which was impassable for vehicles, the road leading up the valley turned to the right and reached the level ground at the summit by a more gradual ascent. There was only a narrow path along the edge of the water, shaded by the branches of the beeches and willows which projected over the stream from the steep hill-side. When you had taken a few steps along this narrow, shady road, you found yourself suddenly confronted by an enormous block of stone, covered in spots with withered moss—a sort of portcullis rolled down by nature from the top of the mountain as if to close the passage.

The obstacle was not insurmountable, however; but, in order to pass it, a sure foot and a head not accessible to vertigo were essential, for the slightest false step would hurl him who made it into the stream, which was both swift and deep. From the rock you could climb to the top of the escarpment by a ladder cut in the stone, for the use of goats rather than men, or you could go down on the other side and resume

your interrupted walk along the edge of the water. In the latter event, you would, after walking about sixty paces, come to a spot where the bank descended again and the stream increased in width, spreading out over a bed of alluvium which came to the surface here and there, forming little islands of sand covered with bushes. This spot was a fording-place well known to shepherds, and in general to all persons who were accustomed to cross from one bank to the other and desired to avoid the necessity of going down to the bridge at the château. It had given its name to the escarpment which rose perpendicularly from the water a short distance below, and was commonly called by the country people the *Roche du Gué*.<sup>1</sup>

Beside the moss-covered rock of which we have spoken, toward the plane-trees, the base of the sort of wall against which it leaned was excavated to a considerable depth; the current had encountered a vein of soft, friable rock there, and the constant friction had eaten into it. It was a natural grotto created by the water, but the earth had undertaken the task of embellishing it. In front, some feet from the ground, a large willow had taken root in a fissure of the rock, and trailed its weeping branches in the current, which carried them down-stream, but could not tear them from the trunk. When the sun's rays filtered through this straggling foliage, darting a long needle of light into the darkness here and there, when the wind wandering among the tree-tops evoked therefrom distant tremulous harmonies, when the monotonous murmuring of the stream arose like a living voice, a singularly touching accord of half-darkness and distant light, of

warm, balmy air, of vague and dying melody, gave to this sanctuary a most fascinating character of solitude and melancholy.

For some moments, Madame de Bergenheim had been sitting at the entrance to the grotto on a bench formed by the base of the rock. With a twig that she had mechanically torn from a tree by the roadside, she was drawing fantastic figures on the fine, glistening sand with which the ground was carpeted, effacing them at once with her foot. Doubtless the hieroglyphics, though inexplicable to others, had some meaning in her eyes; doubtless her imagination traced some thought in those strange, confused lines, and perhaps she feared that the least mark, carelessly left uneffaced, would betray the secret that had been entrusted to it.

When we love, all nature loves with us; it becomes the accomplice of our lightest thoughts, it receives the endless confidences of our affection, and becomes like a living being to listen and reply. Then the imagination acquires incredible powers: the forms of the external world are destroyed by it, and cast in a new mould; it gives intelligence to the most inert matter, and creates it in the image of its desire, as God created man in His own image. Thereupon we go about, as Cherubino did, declaring our love to heaven and earth, for heaven and earth are nothing now to us but a reflection of the being we adore. We find her everywhere; it is she who leans with angel face over the edge of the cloud above our heads, she who speaks to us in the echo the wind questions in the mountain chasms; she gazes at us like a mysterious water-sprite from the bottom of the lake wherein our features

are reflected, her form is outlined on the sand at our feet, whereon our hands trace magic circles. *To see is to have*, Béranger has said. To love is to have, even more surely, for the heart, in its incomprehensible power of expansion, envelops the whole world, and assimilates it when it draws back into its shell.

Clémence was buried in one of those trance-like reveries that blot out time and space, and during which the eyes of the soul see the image of an absent friend as faithfully as the bodily eyes could do. The fibres of her heart, whose vibration had been so suddenly paralyzed at Christian's arrival, had resumed their passionate quivering. As she sat there alone, she went over in her mind the *tête-à-tête* in the salon from the beginning; she heard again the deceitful notes of the waltz; she felt her lover's breath straying through her hair; she received in her eyes the magnetism of that glance she had never been able to meet without embarrassment; her hand trembled a second time beneath the long kiss which had pressed upon it until the white flesh was of the hue of eggplant. And when she reached that point in her dream, it changed to reality; for Octave had stolen to her side, unheard, and, sitting down beside her, had resumed the scene of the piano at the point at which it was interrupted.

She was not frightened. It was not a new sensation that came to her, but the incarnation of one already existing; it was her thought made man. Her mind had gradually reached that pitch of exaltation which renders the transition from dreamland to reality imperceptible. It seemed to her as if Octave had always been there, and as if it were his place;



for a moment, she ceased to think, and lay without moving in the arms that enlaced her. But soon her reason returned. She sprang to her feet, walked away a few steps, and stood facing her lover, with hanging head and crimson cheeks.

"Why are you afraid of me? don't you know that I am worthy to love you?" he said in a voice that betrayed deep emotion. And without attempting to detain her or to approach her, he fell upon his knees with a gesture instinct with melancholy grace.

When a woman has not formally recognized as a right the favor she has accorded during a momentary yielding to blind impulse, to descend from her arms to her feet is to run counter to the law which makes of Danton's observation one of the axioms of love; and as a general rule such a blunder results fatally. Gerfaut was perfectly well aware of all this, for few young men had studied so conscientiously as he the smallest details of the art to which Ovid specifically devoted a long poem. But he also knew that although, under ordinary circumstances, a man should guide his conduct by general rules, exceptional cases sometimes occur, situations out of the common course, when it is necessary to disregard familiar principles. He had analyzed Madame de Bergenheim's character sufficiently to be able to anticipate the slightest variations in her capricious, changing humor. The young woman's terrified attitude, the flush upon her cheeks, and a sudden gleam that he detected through the long lashes of her downcast eyes warned him that a virtuous reaction was imminent, and he was afraid; for he knew that women, under the spur of remorse, always strike their lovers by way of expiating their own offences.

"If I allow this spark of virtue to kindle into a flame," he thought, "I am a lost man for at least a fortnight."

His position was too agreeable for him to take the risk of endangering it by unthinking temerity. To reassure this white dove with the eagle eye, so that she would have no inclination to fly away a second time, seemed to him, therefore, politic as well as in good taste. He made one of those clever retreats which would be equivalent to a flight under a general of mediocre capacity, but upon which a great captain can build as well-deserved a title to renown as upon a real victory. He prudently abandoned the dangerous ground upon which he had taken his position before he should be forcibly driven from it, and passed without awkwardness, by a well-managed transition, from the most impassioned transports to a most humble and submissive demeanor. And when Clémence raised her great eyes, in which shone a threatening light, she saw before her a respectful lover instead of an audacious creature to be chastised; she expected to see an insolent foe, she saw a suppliant slave.

There was such flattering humility in Octave's attitude, such a world of loving anxiety in his accent, that she felt that she was disarmed, and the storm that had gathered on her forehead was dispelled before the lightning-flash had been followed by the thunder. She was conscious of a thrill of ineffable bliss at her heart upon being thus understood and obeyed before she had commanded, for she did not suspect the Machiavelism concealed beneath his adoration; she saw only esteem for herself, consideration for her shame, a delicacy akin to her own, and exquisite grace and courtesy, where a

more experienced coquette would have divined a hidden snare. She could not restrain her feeling of gratitude for one who could love so well, and who sacrificed the demands of his own passion with such winning modesty. She even went so far as to think—women sometimes have such strange ideas!—that to reward him for his noble conduct would be a most prudent measure, because she would in that way encourage him to persevere in the path of virtue and would cultivate in him a taste for the chastened, virtuous affection of whose perilous charms she had sometimes dreamed. At that moment, in short, she found him to be so nearly what her heart wished him to be, that she shuddered at the thought of paining him. Her attitude, her gestures, the expression of her face, betrayed her emotion and her gratitude. She stepped toward Octave, took his hand to raise him, and resumed her seat first, thus tacitly giving him permission to follow her example. When he was once more at her side, very close, she gently pressed the hand she still held in hers, sought her lover's glance with eyes in which the gleam of the diamond had changed to the sheen of velvet, and said to him in the deep, penetrating voice some women can command:

“My friend!”

There are certain very simple words which are stamped with insignificance by being generally employed in a commonplace sense, but which at need can be made to express their primitive meaning in all its fulness. Women especially have the knack of employing at opportune moments such expressions, impassioned in their very reserve, which speak volumes in a single word, and are the more powerful because their real

meaning is not at first appreciated. In Clémence's position it was embarrassing to know what to say; there were few phrases that had not their dangers. To reconcile her lover's effervescent passion with the dignity of her own virtue, so that the one should remain without stain and the other without a wound; to transform that dark, dangerous grotto into one of those places of refuge where unruly passions and wicked desires vanish; to erect her throne as queen, but as a gracious and indulgent queen; to resume her veil without offensive prudery; to cause two hearts, one of which was beating now too quickly, as she thought, to beat in unison, thereby making both so happy that thenceforth the slightest discord would produce insufferable torture,—such was her task; it was not easy of accomplishment. Powerful sentiments are always irritable. The slightest symptom of coldness or displeasure would have stirred Octave's sensitive nature to revolt; and to live at peace with him had become a necessity to which Clémence would perhaps have sacrificed more than she dared confess. On the other hand, what a risk she would run if she yielded to this emotion by which she was surrounded and assailed as by the waves of the rising sea? To what rock high enough to ensure her safety could she fly if she were weak for a single instant? To lose her lover forever, perhaps, by repulsing him with a severity that he might charge to caprice, or to ruin herself by not checking him! She was between two perils, and in order not to fall, neither to be cruel by refusing too much nor imprudent by granting too much, required marvellous cleverness, and the most unerring, exquisite tact. But have not women an innate, instinctive knowledge

of what is right and proper? is there a yawning chasm in life over which they do not soar with smiling face, when they choose to display the ever-ready intelligence with which nature has endowed them?

My friend! Those words were the talisman that was to turn aside the perils of this critical position. Forgiveness for the past, a rule of conduct for the future, an avowal of warmest affection and a safeguard against its excess—everything was contained in those words; they were a gift and an entreaty at the same time; and was not the gift so precious that it was impossible for a man of honor to reject the entreaty? My friend! in those words Clémence proffered the ransom of her virtue, for her impassioned tone expressed the full meaning of the phrase with incomparable force.—“Come,” it seemed to say, “let us leave this scorching atmosphere in which you seek to detain me; its vapors mar the whiteness of my garments, its flame withers the flowers in my crown, its poisoned odor causes ill-omened languor in my heart, and the vertigo of guilty intoxication in my brain. It is not for the angel to descend to man, but for man to ascend to the angel; do not try to pull me down; that would be a sad misfortune to me, for I am in heaven, and to lose it would be worse than death; virtue is a country whence one cannot endure to be exiled; it would mean misery to you, for I know that you are mine, and my sorrow would become yours. So do not clip my wings, but take my hand and come with me; I will fly for you, and will lead you through those fair lands where passion is ennobled and the heart deified. There we may love, for purity sanctifies affection. Remember that there are crime and virtue

in love, as there are perfume and ashes in incense. When the altar vessel and the heart of man are aflame, the perfume and the virtue ascend to heaven, the ashes and the crime descend to earth. Therefore cast to the winds the ashes of your love, that I may come to you and not be defiled thereby. Your passion is the sea whose waves engulf and do not quench the thirst; mine is a lake of sweet, clear water, whereon one can sail without fear of shipwreck; your passion is the brand that kindles the conflagration and then dies, mine is the star in heaven whose splendor lights the world but does not burn. I, you see, possess the gift of true knowledge; so listen to me and obey, if you would have me love you,—and I should be so happy if I could love you!”

Such was the meaning Madame de Bergenheim's look and gesture imparted to that simple but pregnant word, *friend*. Gerfaut understood her even before she uttered the word; his eyes pierced every fold of that half-raised veil with the keen introsusception and feminine delicacy that were the natural adjuncts of his mind. She sued for peace, and peace was so welcome to him, for he was weary of the war! He assented to the treaty without discussing the conditions; he bent his head before the consecrated branch of spiritual love which was proffered as an olive-branch, in a way to justify the belief that he consented to the exorcism of his evil passions for all time. But at the very moment that he was responding with the softest words, the most humble protestations, his mind, with incredible clear-sightedness and rapidity, was weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the bargain. His words were those of a lover of fifteen, his reflections those of a diplomatist of fifty.



“*Friend!*” he thought; “oh! yes, certainly. I won’t quarrel over the word, so long as the fact is recognized; what matters the color of the flag? none but fools worry about that. Friend! that is not the throne, but it is the platform leading to it. The position is not a bad one provisionally, and I shall be a little more comfortable there than at the breach from which I have been driven at every fresh assault for a whole year. Friend it is, then, until something better turns up. Indeed, that word is very pleasant to the ear when it is pronounced with that siren’s accent, and the eyes at the same time say: ‘*Lover!*’”

So he hoisted that pacific flag as a pirate hoists that of the ship whose vigilance he wishes to put to sleep, and he banished for the moment all thought of anything likely to mar the effect of that politic manœuvre. When he found himself seated beside Clémence, in that dark, lonely spot, his imagination aroused by the memory of the recent scene in the salon, he was not able at first to restrain an outburst of most tempestuous emotion. Although a poet of the new school, he was sufficiently familiar with the classics to be involuntarily reminded of this line of the *Æneid*:

“*Speluncam Dido dux et Trojanus eamdem,*” etc.

With the courage of an anchorite he banished that tempting image, and, displaying his usual force of will, he attained the last stage of heroism: retreat to assure final triumph.

Thereupon, in the depths of that mysterious grotto, a scene took place between the two lovers, so filled with delicate touches, with changing shadows, with subtle details, that to

depict it fittingly would require the touch of Correggio and the analytical precision of Gerard Dow, blended with the Ossianic vapor that distinguishes some of the compositions of Girodet. This young woman, of refined intellect, aristocratic to the core in all things, a diamond polished by the transcendent civilization of the foremost salons in Paris, and this man, a shining light among the talented minds of the age, lately the bell-wether of the cloven-footed dandies of Rue Saint-Florentin, had insensibly reached the region of the most ethereal Platonic affection by way of the flower-laden slopes of a delightful acquaintance; she, confident, artlessly enthusiastic, more tender and more expansive in her affection as they left the lowlands farther beneath them and she felt her heart dilate in a purer atmosphere; he, at first absolutely hypocritical in his sentimentalism, then carried away by the enthusiasm of his own words, and at last attaining such a pitch of mental exaltation that he no longer knew whether he was playing a part or whether his mouth was the true interpreter of his heart. They soared thus for a long time in the dark yet luminous heaven of mystic ecstasy, questioning the shadows of every cloud and the brilliancy of every star. They talked of attraction and sympathy, of fraternal attachment and the union of hearts; they trampled the materialism of the senses under their feet, and delivered passion from its coarse envelope. Virtue poured into their love a divine drop, and changed it to a draught of immortality; the cup became a chalice. They evoked with fervent faith the seraphic visions of Swedenborg; they became themselves two spirits from the same sphere, revealed to each other in

their common exile by the halo that shines on the brow of the elect, invisible to the profane; and shaking off the dust of this vile world with supreme contempt, they took their flight heavenward, transformed in their own eyes into angelic lovers, whose spotless robes glisten with the diamonds of everlasting bliss.

"Will you always love me thus?" asked Octave, his brow glowing with virtue.

"Always!" sighed Clémence, not lowering her eyes before the glance of fire that was questioning them.

"You will be the heart of my heart? the angel of my heaven?"

"Your sister," she said, with the sweetest of smiles, touching her lover's cheek with her hand.

He felt the blood rush to his face at the caress, and turned his eyes away with a dreamy air.

"It is more than likely," he thought, "that I am the greatest fool that has ever existed since the days of Joseph and Hippolyte."

In very truth, if some of the good friends he had left at the Café de Paris could have seen him at that moment, there would infallibly have been an outbreak of hilarity among them that would have deafened all the passers-by on Boulevard de Gand. Gerfaut, the man of fashion among artists, and the rake among poets, metamorphosed into one of the young German ministers whom Auguste La Fontaine has drawn for us, so virtuous in their affection and such candid metaphysicians! the Gerfaut (gerfalcon) armed with claws and beak, putting off the bird of prey, and born again as a spotless

dove ! This extraordinary palingenesis had a laughable side which impressed himself. To escape the ridicule of his judgment, to purge himself of his virtue, he was on the point of forgetting the tactics he had imposed upon himself, and of descending in very human fashion from the realm of the angels.

When he felt his lovely companion's hand against his cheek, when he saw, bending toward him, that dearly-loved face, which seemed gradually to lose its pallor under the influence of an internal flame, when he gazed into those expressive eyes which now sought his unbidden and rested there in such loving abandon that they seemed to confess desire, an insidious thought crept into his mind. He remained silent, apparently distraught, but really listening attentively to a tempting voice, like that in which Mephistopheles spoke to Marguerite, as it whispered in his ear :

“Are you sure, O ingenuous lover ! that you are not making yourself a little more ridiculous than is consistent with your antecedents and your character ? Have the virtuous laurels of Scipio Africanus disturbed your sleep ? Have you made a wager with yourself, or is this a sort of penance you are imposing upon yourself in expiation of your past sins ? Have you sworn that all the virtuous deeds of servants supporting their masters, cab-drivers restoring money left in their cabs, and saintly maidens devoting themselves to the service of the sick, shall turn pale before your heroism ? Are you a candidate just now for the Montyon prize ? If you are, simply send the jury a report of your present conversation and add a footnote to the effect that you were talking with one of the loveliest

women in the kingdom, and you are sure of winning the prize. You will be the first *rosière* of your sex ; among all the flowers in your crown of glory, this will not be the least rare or the least original. For where in the devil, I pray to know, did you find this infernal twaddle before which Ballanche and Jean Paul Richter would haul down their colors? I had no idea that you were capable of these supernatural metaphors, this ascetic jargon, this quintessence of religious, virginal affection. What whim impels you to scale the walls of heaven, when earth is so kind to you to-day, this grotto so dark, the air you breathe here so warm and perfume-laden, the moss on the rock so soft that one would say it was a velvet carpet? For a long, long time you have been burning for such a moment as this ; for a year past it has formed part of all your desires, all your dreams, and now that it has come, you waste your opportunity in childish prattle worthy of a school-boy who has just read Werther. Don't you know that artlessness that is pardonable and sometimes attractive at fifteen, becomes rank idiocy at thirty, and that such charming *naïveté* is becoming only to the pink and white complexion and beardless cheeks of adolescence? Do you wish that Dantan, whose satanic hand moulded you, should make a slight change in your bust, adding a veil as a characteristic symbol? I tell you, you are a fool or a madman : a madman to lose an opportunity that may never occur again ; a fool to believe in all this pathetic stuff that you have heard and said as if it were the Gospel. You are not honest, and probably this lovely creature is no more honest than you. Remember her keen wit, her clever coquetry, her mocking humor, whose sarcastic powers you have already

experienced ; do you imagine that she is so blinded by the mist through which you have been walking for this last half-hour, so dizzy with the atmosphere of mysticism you have given her to breathe,—in a word, so completely overcome by all this spiritual over-Rhine magnetism, that some essentially Parisian idea has not ere this come into her mind as well as yours? So give up trying to fly ; walk like everybody else, and you will make more progress ; for you are provided with legs and not with wings. Remember that you are on the earth. Whatever the end you wish to attain, the shortest road is not the one through the moon that you were taking just now. You will dream to-night, perhaps you will die to-morrow, so live to-day."

"What are you thinking about?" said Madame de Bergenheim, surprised at Octave's long silence and distraught air. He almost leaped from the bench at the question.

"May I die if I tell her," he thought ; "she must think me absurd enough as it is."

"Come tell me, for I want you to speak to me," she continued, in the despotic tone of a woman who, knowing that she is beloved, is sure of her power and fond of exercising it.

He continued to disobey ; instead of replying as she demanded, he fastened his eyes upon hers in a long, questioning gaze. He undoubtedly expected to find a reflection of his own thoughts upon Clémence's features, for his glance had the profound, sardonic, searching quality of those the Roman augurs cast at one another as they passed by, if Cicero is to be believed. Madame de Bergenheim felt the magnetic current of his gaze penetrate her eyelids and make its way like a

sword to that unknown region, the holy of holies where the intelligence resides. At that moment, it would have been impossible for her to have a single thought her lover did not share, for it seemed to her that those gleaming eyes were fixed upon her heart and examining it fibre by fibre, fold after fold. She was conscious of a pang of outraged modesty at being thus inspected to the inmost recesses of her heart, and to escape this mute questioning, which embarrassed her, she laid her head against Octave's shoulder, saying softly :

“Don't look at me so, or I shall not love your eyes.”

In this movement her straw hat slipped off, the ribbons not being tied, and in its fall carried away the comb that held her lovely chestnut hair together, so that it fell in disorder over her shoulders. A lock or two straying upon Gerfaut's breast, he passed his hand with amorous eagerness behind the lovely head upon his shoulder, to gather up the silky, perfumed mass and press it to his lips, and buried his face in it as in a bouquet of flowers. At the same time, he gently passed his arm about the pliant, graceful form which seemed, by bending forward, to invite the caress ; but keenly observant even at that moment, he did not attempt a more passionate embrace. His arm enveloped her so lightly that she might have thought that she was free, and indeed he wished her to be free. The breviary of a courtier consists, so it has been said, of three words : ask, receive, and take ; a lover's is the same. To ask is very sweet, to take has the attractiveness that always attaches to forbidden fruit, but to receive is bliss itself. Octave had a presentiment that that bliss would soon be his. Having implored so earnestly and so long, to obtain so little,



he determined, with a sort of coquetry, to take his turn at being courted. His secret wish was soon gratified ; in a moment he saw that Clémence was moving closer to him of her own will. Through the thin material of his coat the warmth of her irregular breathing reached his breast, and it seemed to him that his heart went out to receive a kiss divined rather than felt.

The half-light of the grotto gradually took on a more mysterious and shadowy character. Night was approaching, and the sun was near the horizon ; its beams, which hitherto had filtered through the branches of the weeping-willow, had gradually retreated, and now only the summit of the rock shone golden in their light. The noise seemed to die away with the light. The rustling of the trees became feebler and the murmuring of the stream more gentle. The tranquillity would have been quite undisturbed had not the baying of the dogs, far up the valley in full chase, reminded them of the outside world in this spot where everything invited forgetfulness. But this very noise was an additional safeguard to the lovers, for the barking constantly grew fainter and fainter, denoting that the hunters, and with them the danger, were steadily increasing their distance.

“Clémence,” said Octave in a tone that showed that his analytical philosophy was vanquished.

Madame de Bergenheim raised her head and looked at him for a moment uncertainly, as if she had just awakened from a dream.

“How your heart beats !” said she, “my poor friend !”

She laid her head upon his shoulder anew with the grace of a child that wishes to go to sleep again on its mother's breast.



Did she hope to calm the excitement of his wildly-beating heart by that caressing pressure? or did she feel a secret thrill of joy in listening to the voice that said to her in every throb: *I love you?* Whatever the motive of that attitude, Octave did not complain, although he felt that his heart throbbed with redoubled violence at the touch of that lovely brow. His eyes wandered vaguely here and there, as if seeking counsel from the tiniest points of the rock, from the smallest tufts of grass that grew in the crevices of the grotto. Instinctively he raised the dear head that lay against his breast, put aside the curls with which it was covered, and arranged them in bands about her temples with extreme care, as if all his thoughts were bent upon that loving task. But the violence of his emotion was stronger than scheming or reserve: he seized Clémence in his arms in a burst of passion, crying in an almost unintelligible voice:

“This friendship is too cruel! Tell me to die if you will not love me!”

She was moved to the bottom of her soul by the tone in which these words were uttered; she was afraid of him, and of herself even more; the danger was so great that to reflect an instant would have been to succumb to it. She tried to extricate herself from his embrace, which seemed to her like a girdle of fire; failing that, she slipped through his arms to her knees, and besought her lover's compassion, without speaking, by a supplicating look; for she had neither voice to pray nor strength to struggle. When he saw her prostrate herself thus, Octave was conscious anew of a strange feeling of irony and distrust. It was not the first time women had sued to him for

mercy ; he knew that that pantomime of dismay is often very far from expressing their genuine sentiments, and that many women take the greatest pains to invest the death of their virtue with the utmost dignity, after the manner of the Roman gladiators. This thought passed through his heart like a cold steel ; he might perhaps have been resigned to find Clémence always cold, indifferent, and disdainful ; but to find her sly and artful was a disillusionment which he felt that he could never forgive her. By one of those curious instances of injustice of which ardent imaginations are often guilty, he attributed her weakness to her as a crime before it was proved ; he realized that he should love her less if she loved him too much. Although he was himself a victim of fiercest desire, he would have had her at that moment calm and virtuous.

“If she lack strength,” he said to himself, “she is simply a woman like all the rest, and in that case she is not worth the year of my life I have given her.”

A second time his gleaming eyes gazed into Madame de Bergenheim's with relentless boldness. No sign of intelligence greeted that Masonic appeal ; no symptom of embarrassment or consent confirmed his doubts. The irony of his thoughts was not understood by her, and the insult passed without reply because she knew nothing of it. As he studied the expression of the face raised to his, that innocent face animated by the truest affection, as the flame of a lamp casts a pure white light through the transparent alabaster that surrounds it ; as he contemplated the combination of involuntary emotion and alarmed modesty, the genuine virtuous purpose still afloat

amid that storm-tossed sea of enervating emotions,—the lovely flower of modest virtue and confiding unreserve, which a breath of love had swayed until it touched his knees, his feelings were a mixture of happiness and remorse. He was ashamed of himself, of his distrust, of his deceitful experience, of his fatal incredulity always ready to wither the sweetest roses in his hand. With the humility of a noble, loving nature, prompt to recognize its faults, he bowed before the moral superiority of woman, so perfect when she is good, so angelic when she is virtuous, and carrying all the noble qualities of mind and heart to such a sublime pitch of exaggeration. He experienced one of the rarest joys in the life of a man of the world; he believed in the innocence of the woman he loved. At that moment, Voltairean scepticism had naught to say. His whole heart knelt in adoration before Clémence, and he threw his scalpel far away, shuddering to think that he had put his hand to it: is not a scalpel a dagger?

Octave put his lips with renewed ecstasy to the spring at whose bottom he had feared to see a reptile, and which he had found to be as fresh as the morning dew, as pure as the sky whose image it reflected. He bathed his passion in that clear, unsullied stream to recover the tranquillity which seemed to him at that moment a duty. Keeping an extremely close watch upon his thoughts and his words, so that nothing might annoy her whom he found to be worthy of all obedience and respect, he was the first to lead the conversation back into a peaceful, temperate channel. This sort of intercourse, wherein the tenderest sentiments enveloped their perfumes

in the white petals of the lily, and the most ardent fires held their flames in check in order that the heat alone and not the danger might be felt, came at last to have in his eyes so novel and so sweet a savor, that he limited his desires to having his fill of that, without asking for more. The ground that Clémence had accorded him and of which she had recognized him as sovereign was of limited extent; but was it a small realm for an intelligent heart? Instead of breaking his head against barriers which, as he well knew, were not unchangeable, he exerted all the powers of his mind to embellish his conquest. Far from seeking, with a persistence that is always coarse and ill-bred, to pluck a joy as yet unripe, he left all thought of the harvest to the future; hope was rich enough to gild the present. He contented himself, therefore, with the friendship allotted him, but he made it so sweet and so intimate that it seemed to surpass the prohibited love, and he entered into the spirit of his part so thoroughly, his expressions were so caressing, his voice so melodious, the burning rays that darted from his eyes were tempered by such a velvety film, that, if Clémence's heart had not long been his, he would have won it that day.

By an impulse natural to women, whose gestures are always more eloquent than their words, and who frequently express in their attitude the confession their tongue cannot make, Madame de Bergenheim had remained on her knees, although the danger that had led her to assume that position had passed. True love compels the haughtiest natures to feel this invincible necessity of submission; the proud, when they love, are prone

to carry their love to adoration. The nobly-born lady whose mind did not always rise superior to the empty prejudices of birth, the queen of the salon, sated with adulation and homage, found so great a charm in prostrating herself, that she seemed to have lost her memory in order to enjoy that charm for a longer time. With her heart hanging on Octave's words, she forgot herself completely in the bliss of loving, heedless of the flight of time, of the increasing darkness, of the danger that might arise at any moment. The distant notes of the horn repeated by the echoes aroused her at last to a realization of what prudence required. By a sudden effort, she rose and fastened her hair on top of her head in hot haste, by no means free from anxiety.

"Will you still refuse to give me a lock of hair as a souvenir of this hour of heaven?" said Octave, gently detaining her hand as she was about to replace her comb.

"Do you need it for a reminder?" she replied, with a glance which was neither a rebuke nor a refusal.

"The memory in my heart, and the lock of hair on my heart! We live in an unworthy age. I cannot glorify myself by wearing your colors in the eyes of all men, and yet I would like to wear a symbol of my serfdom."

"My knight!" she said, affectionately and proudly.

She let her hair fall once more, but seemed embarrassed how to execute her gracious purpose.

"I cannot cut them with my teeth," she said, with a smile that disclosed a double row of pearls.

Octave took from his pocket a stiletto with a short, broad blade, as sharp as a Damascus blade.

"Why do you always carry that dagger?" the young woman asked, in an altered voice; "I can't help feeling terrified when I see it in your hand."

"Have no fear," said Gerfaut, without answering the question, "I will respect the band that serves you as a crown. I know where I must cut, and, though, my ambition is great, my hand may be trusted."

Madame de Bergenheim had no confidence in this discretion, and feared to put her lovely hair at her lover's mercy; so she took the dagger in her own hands and cut off a small lock which she twisted in her fingers and then offered to him with a loving gesture that doubled the value of the gift.

At that moment, the horn rang out again, nearer at hand than before.

"To think of leaving you already!" cried Clémence, struggling with her inclination; "but I must. Dear angel! let me go now; bid me adieu."

She leaned toward him and offered her forehead to receive his adieu. Octave's lips found hers instead, but the last kiss was rapid and fleeting as a lightning-flash. Extricating herself from the arms that still sought to detain her, she darted from the grotto, and in a moment had disappeared in the dark windings of the path.

Gerfaut remained some time on the same spot, plunged in the depression that assails the heart whenever it has expended a large store of energy in intense emotion. Rousing himself at last from his dreamy languor, he started to ascend the cliff at the point where he had come down, in order to reach the top of the escarpment. But he had taken only a few steps when he

stopped, with a gesture of terror, as if he had seen a venomous reptile rear its head in his path.

At the top of the ladder cut in the rock, amid the hazel and hawthorn bushes which bordered the crest of the cliff, he had discovered Bergenheim, perfectly motionless and bending over in the attitude of a man trying to see without being seen. As the baron's eyes were not turned in Gerfaut's direction, he was unable to decide whether he was the object of his espionage, or whether the lay of the land was such that Christian could see Madame de Bergenheim, who should have been under the plane-trees at that moment. In his uncertainty as to what he should do, he, too, remained where he was, half lying on the rock, which jutted out in such a way that, in that position, he might escape the baron's glance, provided that he had not already been seen by him.

## XIX

A few moments before the clock of the château struck four, a man crossed the ditch that formed the boundary of the park at the head of the valley. Lambernier—for he it was who was thus prompt to keep his agreement—started through the bushes toward the corner of the wood of La Corne, which he had mentioned to Marillac; but, after walking in that direction for some little time, he was constrained to retrace his steps. The hunt, which he had heard before entering the park, was coming toward him at that moment, for the hare the dogs had just started was making for the high land in obedience



to his natural instinct, the peculiar formation of their paws making those creatures much more agile than dogs in the matter of climbing. The Provençal realized that to go on in the direction he had first chosen would infallibly lead him into the midst of the hunters; and, insolent as he was, he feared the baron too much to care to appear before him and expose himself anew to such chastisement as had already been inflicted upon him. He retraced his steps, therefore, and, making a detour through the woods, with every foot of which he was perfectly familiar, went down toward the stream, intending to go up again at the spot appointed for the meeting, when the coast was clear.

Lambertier had reached the tree-covered plateau above the Roche du Gué, when, as he came out into the centre of a clearing where the trees had recently been felled, he saw, walking rapidly toward him, two men whom he was by no means pleased to meet in that place. The foremost of the two was Mademoiselle de Corandeuil's coachman, one of the bulkiest Automedons whose rotund form ever crushed the box-seat of a landau or berlin. He was striding along with his hands in the pockets of his green jacket, hunching his broad shoulders as if he were assigned to the task of replacing Atlas. His laced cap perched on his ear in military fashion, his frowning brows and his puffed-out cheeks denoted that he was in the way of performing some important act with which his mind was busy. At his side, Léonard Rousselet was working his spider-claw legs with corresponding activity. The old man was carefully holding up the capacious skirts of his coat, like a petticoat, lest the young shoots from the stumps that



covered the ground should further lacerate the flimsy material, already seriously impaired by the teeth of the pack.

When he caught sight of them, Lambernier attempted to go back into the underbrush he had just left, but he was brought to a standstill by a threatening hail, as a vessel chased by a pirate receives a shot in her rigging, by way of command to heave to.

"Margajat!" cried the coachman, in a voice almost as loud as the report of a four-pounder; "halt, and turn about! If you trot, I'll gallop."

"What do you want? I have no business with you," replied the mechanic, with a half-reckless, half-ill-humored air.

"But I have business with you," retorted the stout domestic, planting himself in front of him, and balancing himself alternately on his heels and his toes with a movement like that of the wooden horses we give children to play with. "Come here, Rousselet; are you broken-winded or foundered?"

"I haven't legs like your horses," replied the old man, as he came up at last all out of breath, and took off his huge hat to wipe his forehead.

"What does this mean—jumping at me like two assassins on the edge of a wood?" demanded Lambernier, foreseeing that this beginning was likely to lead up to a scene in which he would play a by no means agreeable part.

"It means," said the coachman, "*primo*, that Rousselet isn't in it; I don't need any one to help me handle a walking rushlight like you; *secundo*, that you're going to get your pay at the double-quick in four movements."

With that, he pulled his cap down over his right ear and turned up his cuffs to give more freedom of action to a pair of broad hands, thick as a loaf of bread.

The three men had stopped at a spot where charcoal had been burned the year before. The ground, which had retained a dark, heavy look at that point, was more level there than in the rest of the clearing, and it seemed a very appropriate place for a duel with fists or with any other weapons. When he observed the coachman's bellicose preparations, Lambernier placed his hat and coat on an old stump, and took his stand facing his adversary with a reasonably confident manner, despite the evident disproportion in strength between them. But, before hostilities had actually begun, Rousselet stepped forward, extended his arm, thin as the wand of a herald-at-arms, between them, and said in a voice whose solemnity seemed heightened by the gravity of the occasion:

"I do not presuppose that it is your purpose to break each other's jaws simultaneously, for only uneducated persons conduct themselves in such a vulgar way; you should proceed, therefore, to a friendly explanation, to see if the difficulty is not susceptible of accommodation. Such matters were adjusted so when I was in the twenty-fifth demi-brigade."

"The explanation," said the coachman in his coarse voice, "is that this dirty villain never missed a chance to blackguard me and my horses, and that I swore to pummel him and lay him out the first time he fell into my hands. So, Père Rousselet, right wheel. He'll find out whether I'm a pickle; he'll find I'm a pickled pepper."

"If you made use of that ill-bred expression," observed Léonard, turning toward the Provençal, "you were in fault, and you should ask pardon, as is customary among educated people."

"It's false!" said Lambernier; "besides, everybody calls the Corandeuls that on account of their coats."

"Didn't you say Sunday, at the Headless Woman, before the tilemaker and Thiédot the miller, that all the servants at the château are a pack of lazy loafers and good for nothing, and if you met any one of them that looked at you in a way you didn't like, you'd test his sides with your plane?"

"If you said that, it was disrespectful," observed Rousselet.

"Thiédot had better keep close to his house after this," growled the mechanic, clenching his fists.

"It looks well for out-at-elbows fellows like you to insult gentlemen like us," said the lackey in an imposing tone.—  
"And didn't you say that when I drove mademoiselle to Mass I looked like a green toad on my box, meaning to insult my figure and my coat? didn't you say that?"

"Simply joking about the color of your livery. They call the others red mullets and crabs."

"Lobsters are lobsters," rejoined the coachman imperiously; "if they don't like it, they have teeth. But I won't allow any one to attack my honor and my horses' honor by calling them sorry nags, and that's what you did, margajat! And didn't you say I sent bags of oats to Remiremont to be sold, and that I hid them in the hay-wagons, and that you could see Bewerley growing thin for a month past?—Père Rousselet, did any one ever imagine such rascality? to dare

to say I would play with the lives of my horses!—Didn't you say that, you beggar?—And didn't you say Mamselle Marianne and I had an understanding and she fed me on the sly in her room, and that's the reason I ate so little at the table? While here's Rousselet has been a doctor, and he knows I have to diet on account of my weak stomach."

At that point, the coachman, in a transport of wrath, struck himself a violent blow on a chest as expansive as either of his horses could boast.

"Lambernier," said Rousselet, compressing his lips with a disgusted expression, "I must confess, that for a well-bred man, you have been guilty of some very indecent remarks."

"To say that I eat up my horses' oats!" roared the coachman, in the last stage of exasperation.

"I ought to have said that you drink them," retorted Lambernier in an undertone, with his usual sneering laugh.

"Turn to the right, Rousselet, and don't get under my wheels," cried the balky Phaeton at this fresh insult. As the old peasant did not stand aside and leave the field clear quickly enough to suit him, he took him by the arm and whirled him around with such force that he landed in a sitting posture on the trunk of a tree ten feet away.

At that moment, a third personage arrived, to complicate matters by taking part in the scene as a very observant spectator at all events, if not as an actor. If the two champions had suspected his presence, they would probably have postponed their quarrel to a more opportune moment, however great their present wrath, for this spectator was no other than the baron himself, whom the hazard of the hunt had guided

to that spot. When he espied the trio gesticulating in a highly animated fashion, and heard a few words of the discussion, he concluded that a tempestuous scene was about to occur. He had long desired to bridle the bellicose humor of the servants at the château, and he was not sorry to catch one of them *in flagrante delicto*, in order to make an example of him and at the same time inflict condign chastisement on the insolent Lambernier. Instead of showing himself at once, therefore, he halted and remained out of sight in the underbrush on the edge of the clearing, ready to intervene and bring about the dénouement.

When he saw the giant charge upon him, brandishing his fists, the Provençal leaped to one side like a tiger that feels an elephant's weight on his paw. The coachman's blow struck nothing but the air, and he himself lost his balance and staggered forward, so great was his impetus. Lambernier, taking advantage of his adversary's position, summoned all his strength and threw himself upon him, striking him such a violent blow in the side that he brought him to his knees. Then, with incredible agility, he dealt him a half-dozen blows on the head, as if he were hammering on an anvil, doing his utmost to overturn him altogether.

If the coachman had not had a skull as hard as a dragoon's helmet, he could not have received such a storm of blows with impunity ; but, fortunately for him, his was one of those sturdy Breton heads that shatter the staves that come in contact with them. Except for some little dizziness, he emerged safe and sound from his perilous plight. Far from losing his presence of mind in the uncomfortable position in which he found himself,

he placed his left hand on the ground, where it made as firm a support as a driven pile, and, putting his other arm behind him, twined it around the joiner's legs, mowing him down, so to speak, so that, a moment later, despite his struggles, he lay on his back in front of his adversary. The latter, holding him down with his brawny hands, placed a knee as large as a platter on his chest, then removed his own cap which his enemy's blows had driven over his eyes, and prepared to do full and signal justice.

"Ah! you'd take me from behind, would you?" he exclaimed, smacking his tongue derisively, as if he were urging on his horses.—"Squared accounts make good friends, you know.—Oh! you needn't squirm, I've got you, my boy.—Look you, if you try to bite my hand again, I'll make a snaffle with these two fingers and squeeze your windpipe so that you won't be likely to have the glanders, I tell you! Now, attention! I'm going to pay off old scores and rub up your headstall a bit to teach you French politeness.—Take this for the green toad;—take this for Bewerley;—take this for Mamselle Marianne——"

Smiting and hurling invectives at his opponent at the same time, after the manner of Homer's heroes, he followed up each *take this* with a blow of his Goliath's hand. At the third, the blood flowed from the Provençal's mouth with his inarticulate roars, as he struggled under his enemy's knee like a buffalo in the coils of a boa-constrictor; at last, he succeeded in slipping his hand into his trousers pocket.

"Ah! you blackguard, I'm a dead man!" suddenly roared the coachman, springing back.

Lambernier availed himself of the freedom thus afforded him and quickly jumped to his feet. Paying no heed to his adversary, who had fallen on his knees and was holding his hand to his left hip, he picked up his hat and coat and fled across the clearing, leaping over stumps and uprooted tree-trunks. Rousselet, who had thus far prudently kept at a safe distance, hearing his comrade's cry of pain, tried to stop the joiner, but he waved before his eyes a pair of iron compasses already dripping with blood, with such a savage expression on his face that the peasant made way for him, and jumped aside more quickly than he had run forward.

At this tragic and unexpected catastrophe, Bergenheim, who was on the point of coming out from behind the tree where he was hidden, in order to exert his authority, started off in another direction in pursuit of the murderer. He judged from the course he had taken, that he would try to get to the river and cross it at the ford. Knowing the ground perfectly, he believed that he would infallibly head him off by following the path on which he then was. So he started off along that path with his gun on his shoulder. He soon reached a platform on the edge of the escarpment we have mentioned and just at the top of the staircase cut in the rock that led down to the grotto. It was the only spot at which the joiner could leave the park. Christian, in order the more surely to master him, crouched behind a bush that hung over the stream, and it was at that moment that Gerfaut, some forty feet below, saw him, but was unable to guess the motive of his actions.

Bergenheim found that he had judged rightly, when he heard a moment later a noise in the underbrush like that made



by a wild boar, as he runs in a straight line, trampling down large shrubs like blades of grass. Soon Lambernier appeared at one side of the platform, with a wild, haggard expression in his eyes, and his face besmeared with blood from the blows he had received. He stopped an instant to take breath, wiped his compasses on the grass, and concealed them in his pocket, stanching with a handkerchief the blood that flowed from his nose and mouth, and, having put on his coat, strode across the platform toward the path.

"Halt!" cried the baron, rising abruptly and barring his passage.

The mechanic leaped back in terror; then he drew his compasses once more, and started forward to throw himself upon this new adversary with the determination of despair.

In response to this threatening pantomime, Christian cocked his gun, and brought it to bear on him with as much precision and coolness as if he were explaining the charge in twelve-time to a squad of infantry.

"Down with your arms!" he exclaimed in his commanding voice, "or I'll blow the top of your head off like a rabbit."

The Provençal emitted a stifled cry of horror when he saw within three feet of his eyes the two barrels ready to blow out his brains. Having satisfied himself that there was no possible means of escape or of offering the least resistance, he closed the compasses with a convulsive movement and sullenly threw them at Bergenheim's feet.

"Now," said the baron, "you will be good enough to walk ahead of me to the château; if you turn out of the path a



single step to right or left, you can rely upon my emptying both barrels into your loins. So, right about! march!"

As he spoke, he stooped, picked up the compasses, and put them in his pocket, without taking his eyes off his prisoner.

"Monsieur le baron, the coachman provoked me; I only defended myself," stammered Lambernier, turning pale.

"Very good, very good, we'll see about that later. Forward!"

"You mean to turn me over to the police. Then I'm a lost man."

"It will be one cowardly rascal less," cried Christian, recoiling with disgust from the fellow, who had thrown himself on his knees in front of him.

"I have three children, Monsieur le baron, three children," he repeated in a supplicating, heart-broken voice.

"Will you go on?" retorted the baron imperiously; and he made a gesture with his gun as if to strike him.

Lambernier sprang to his feet; the expression of alarm upon his face gave place to one of decision mingled with hatred and irony.

"Very well," he cried, "let us go! but remember what I am going to say to you; if you have me arrested, you will be the first to repent of it, though you are a baron. If I appear before the courts, I shall have something to tell that you would pay me a high price for, perhaps. They gave Jacquin and his wife a *charivari* Sunday; look out that they don't do the same at the château."

These words were a coarse allusion to a conjugal misadventure which the good people of La Fauconnerie had recently

undertaken to punish, by virtue of that singular fashion which has now attained the dignity of a constitutional custom, thanks to the progress of civilization, and serves as a digestive at ministerial dinners at the end of every session.

Bergenheim gazed sternly at the Provençal.

"What does this insolence mean?" he demanded.

"If you promise to let me go, I will tell you what I know; if you turn me over to the gendarmes, I tell you again that you'll be sorry more than once that you didn't listen to me to-day."

"It's some fable to gain time, I suppose; no matter, go on—I am listening."

The joiner glanced at Christian distrustfully.

"Give me your word of honor to let me go."

"If I don't do it, can't you still tell your story?" rejoined the baron, who, notwithstanding his involuntary curiosity, did not care to give his word to a rascal, whose probable object was to deceive him and then make his escape.

This observation impressed Lambernier, who, after a moment's reflection, seemed to recover his self-possession and confidence to a remarkable degree, considering the position in which he found himself; in the first place, he looked about in all directions to see if any one was coming; then he stooped and held his ear to the ground for a moment. No sound could be heard; even the distant baying of the dogs had ceased, as if the hare had been run to earth at last. The most depressing silence prevailed around, in the underbrush and on the wooded hill-sides on the other bank; below the narrow platform flowed the river, swift and deep, to all appearance

no living being was a witness of this scene, and there was no one who could overhear what was said; for Gerfaut, in the niche in the rock where he was still hiding, was entirely invisible to the actors, nor could he see them since Bergenheim had left the edge of the escarpment; from time to time their voices reached his ears, but he could not distinguish the meaning of their words.

Leaning with one hand upon his gun, Christian waited for the joiner to begin his story, fastening upon him his bright, piercing eyes, gleaming instinctively with vague menace. Lambernier met his glance without lowering his eyelids and with a confident expression bordering on insolence.

"You know, Monsieur le baron," said he, "that when the alterations were made in Madame's apartments, the carved work in her bedroom was put in my hands. When I took away the old wainscoting, I saw that the wall between the windows was built with a hollow space in the centre, and I asked madame if she wanted the front panel nailed up as the other was, or if she preferred to have it left open, which would make a little cupboard. She told me to leave it so that she could open it with a secret spring. So I made the panel swing on hinges hidden in the moulding, and put a little button in the centre of the rose-work below; you only have to press it after turning it to the right and the wainscot opens like a door."

At this beginning, Christian became extremely interested.

"Monsieur will remember that he was at Nancy serving on the jury, and madame's room was done during his absence. As I was the only one who worked on the wainscoting, because

the other workmen weren't capable of carving the mouldings as madame wanted it done, nobody but me knows that the panel isn't nailed all along the wall."

"Well?" said the baron impatiently.

"Well," Lambernier repeated in a careless tone, "if I should have to appear before the court on account of the unlucky blow I gave the coachman, I might perhaps revenge myself by telling what I saw in that cupboard only about a month ago."

"Finish your story," said Bergenheim, mechanically grasping the barrel of his gun.

"Mademoiselle Justine took me into madame's chamber to put up the curtains, and, as I wanted some nails, she went out to get me some. As I was casting my eye over the wainscoting, which I hadn't seen since I put it up, I found that the oak had swelled a little in one place because it wasn't dry enough when we used it. I thought I would see if the same thing had happened between the windows, and whether the panel would work. So I pressed the button, and when the cupboard was open I saw a small package of letters on the shelf; it seemed a strange place to me to put letters in, and suddenly it occurred to me that she must want to hide them from monsieur."

Bergenheim interrupted the fellow with a withering glance; but he restrained himself, and motioned him to continue.

"They were already saying that you meant to send me away from the château; I don't know how it was, but I thought it might be of some service to me to have one of those letters, and I took the first one I laid my hands on

## Chapter XXV

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*Christian, clinging to the tree he had seized, stood erect and then raised Lambernier, who would have been quite incapable of standing up by himself, for the fright and the sight of the eddying water had given him the vertigo.*











in the middle of the bunch; I had just time after that to shut the panel, for Mademoiselle Justine was already in the next room."

"Well, what connection is there between those letters and the police?" demanded Christian in a voice that betrayed deep emotion despite his efforts to appear cool.

"Oh! nothing at all," replied the joiner, with an indifferent air; "but I thought you would prefer not to have it known that madame has a lover."

Bergenheim shivered as if a deathly chill had seized him, and as he raised his hand over the joiner's head, he dropped his gun, which fell to the ground.

With a movement as swift as thought, Lambernier stooped and took possession of the weapon, but he had not time to use it if such was his intention. Seized by the throat with a fury that made resistance impossible, and almost choked by two iron hands, he had hardly strength enough to throw the gun away in the direction of the woods.

"The letter! the letter!" said Christian in a very low, trembling voice, and he put his face close to the joiner's, as if he feared that a breath of air passing between them would seize upon his words to carry them away and repeat them.

"Let me go first—I can't breathe——" stammered Lambernier, whose face within a moment had become as purple and whose eyes were bulging out as if his adversary's fingers were a tightly-drawn rope.

The baron, succeeding at last in subduing the violence of his emotions, granted this almost inaudible petition; his hands relaxed their hold upon the joiner's neck, and grasped the

lapels of his coat, thus depriving him of any chance of escape, while according him the faculty of speech.

"The letter!" he repeated, seeking in vain to prevent his emotion from betraying itself in his tone.

Dazed by the shock he had received, and in no condition to reflect with his usual prudence, Lambernier mechanically obeyed this command; he fumbled in his pockets for some time, and finally produced from his waistcoat pocket a neatly-folded paper, saying, with a shamefaced air:

"Here's the scrap; it's worth ten louis if it's worth a sou."

Christian seized the paper with avidity and unfolded it with his teeth, for he could not use both hands without liberating his prisoner. It was one of those letters that are distributed in great numbers every day in Paris, manifestly in fraud of the postal service. The small size to which it had been reduced by much folding, indicated that it had been forwarded directly to its address by one of those thousand and one means against which the police who watch over salon morals are compelled to admit their helplessness. Perhaps it was slipped, by mutual agreement, from a yellow glove into a white glove, in the evolutions of the *right and left*, the figure that looks so kindly upon love-affairs; perhaps it was cunningly tucked into a handkerchief with embroidered corners, left upon a piano; or beneath the folds of a dress conveniently extended along the edge of a divan, or in one of the little muffs that are trimmed with deception no less than with ermine. Beyond its size, there was nothing about it to enlighten the curiosity of the reader. It was like all letters of its kind, without address, seal, or signature; it differed from the vast majority of its fellows only

in the simple and natural eloquence of its style. Ardent protestations, mild and loving complaints, the diamonds in the shape of words which come to one's mouth only for the woman one loves, and which, when listened to in cold blood, if they could be, would bear the stamp of genius; all the gushing, expansive outflow of a sincere passion pleaded with spirit and energy,—these, together with a thousand allusions, unintelligible to any save the correspondents themselves, told of a love which had still much to desire, but likewise much to hope for. The writing was entirely unfamiliar to Bergenheim, but the name Clémence, repeated several times, made it impossible to doubt that the letter was really written to his wife. When he had read it through, he put it in his pocket with apparent calmness, and gazed fixedly at the Provençal, who, meanwhile, had remained passive in the hand that held him fast, without making a single attempt to free himself.

“You have made a mistake, Lambernier,” he said; “it is a letter written by me before my marriage.”—And he struggled hard to smile, but the muscles of his lips refused to act the lie, and drops of cold perspiration glistened at the roots of his hair below his temples.

Though apparently heedless of what was taking place, the joiner had noticed the change in the baron's features while he was reading the letter. His contemptuous, uncouth sagacity persuaded him that he might turn his observations to his own advantage; he believed that the moment had come to resume the upper hand and lay down the law, showing that he fully appreciated the importance of the secret he had disclosed.

His face wore an incredulous, mocking expression as he replied :

“Monsieur’s handwriting must have changed a great deal, then ; I have orders from him that don’t look any more like that letter than a glass of water looks like a glass of wine.”

Christian tried to think of a reply, but could not ; his eyebrows contracted and insensibly approached each other, as if a fire within had shrivelled the skin that connected them.

Without heeding that symptom of a tempest on the point of bursting, Lambernier continued, with increasing self-assurance :

“When I said the letter was well worth ten louis, I meant to a stranger, and I know I wouldn’t have to go far to put my hand on them ; but Monsieur le baron is too sensible not to know the value of a secret like this. I don’t want to have to make a price, but if I am obliged to run away on account of the coachman, as I don’t happen to have any money just now——”

He had not time to finish ; Bergenheim, seizing him by the waist with both hands, made his body describe a horizontal semicircle without touching the ground, then forced him to his knees on the brink of the footway, the steps of which, irregularly hewn, descended the face of the cliff almost perpendicularly. Lambernier suddenly saw his haggard, agitated face reflected in the stream flowing fifty feet or more below. The blackness of the water attested its depth, and the current was so swift, that its surface, broken into an infinitude of undulating threads, seemed like a vast unbound head of hair. At that sight, and feeling at the same moment a powerful knee forcing him over the abyss as if to compel him to realize

to the full the perils and the horror of it, the joiner uttered a cry of alarm ; his hands clutched convulsively at the tufts of grass and roots of plants on the brink of the cliff, and he struggled with all his might to throw himself back on the level ground. But his efforts were all in vain against his adversary's superior strength, and resulted only in changing his position for the worse. After two or three fruitless attempts, he found himself lying flat on his stomach, with his body more than half over the edge, and nothing to save him from a fatal fall except Bergenheim's hand upon his collar, which kept him from falling over as well as from rising.

"Have you mentioned a word of this to anybody?" the baron demanded, as he firmly grasped the trunk of a nut-tree that overhung the stream, and thus preserved his own equilibrium on the dangerous ground he had chosen as the scene of this discussion.

"Not a soul—ah ! ten thousand devils !—my head's going round," replied the joiner, closing his eyes in terror, for, dizzy as he was with the rush of blood to his head consequent upon his position, it seemed to him as if the stream were gradually coming up to him, and yawning chasms opening here and there in the water, like coffins, to swallow him up.

"You see that if I move my hand you are a dead man," rejoined the baron, forcing him farther over.

"Better hand me over to the gendarmes ; I won't say anything about the letters ; as sure as there's a God in heaven, I won't say anything about them. But don't let me go—hold on to me—don't let me go, I say—I'm slipping—oh ! blessed Mother of God !"

Christian, clinging to the tree he had seized, stood erect and then raised Lambernier, who would have been quite incapable of standing up by himself, for the fright and the sight of the eddying water had given him the vertigo. When he was on his feet, he staggered two or three times, and his legs bent under him as if he were drunk.

The baron looked at him for a moment in silence, and the expression of his eyes was calculated to increase to the highest pitch the terror of which the symptoms were plainly visible.

"Begone," he said at last, "leave the country at once; you have time to fly before any prosecution is instituted. But remember, if you ever say a word to any one on earth of what you have told me and of what has taken place between us, I shall know how to find you, though I have to go to the end of the world; in that case, you shall die by no hand but mine."

"I swear by the Holy Virgin and by all the saints," stammered Lambernier, who had suddenly become a fervent Catholic, the devotional instincts of the Southron being aroused by the danger he had just passed through.

Christian pointed to the stone stairway at the top of which they were standing.

"There lies your road," he said; "pass the ford and go up through the ash woods into Alsace. If you hold your peace, I will see that no harm comes to you.—But remember:—a single incautious word and you are a dead man."

As he finished speaking, with one of the nervous movements the force of which men of great strength do not always correctly estimate, he pushed him in the direction indicated.

Lambertier, whose strength was completely exhausted by the successive contests in which he had recently been engaged, so that he could hardly stand upright, lost his equilibrium at this shock, which was as violent as it was unexpected. He stumbled on the first step, turned about trying to regain his balance, and finally fell, head foremost, the whole length of the almost perpendicular incline. A projection of the escarpment, against which he first struck, threw him back upon the crumbling rock. He slid slowly down, uttering heart-rending cries; for a moment, he clung to a little bush which had sprouted in a cleft of the rock, but his arm, broken in two places by the fall, had not the strength to hold on to that fragile support; he suddenly let it slip from his hand, gave one last shriek of pain and despair, rolled over twice, and fell heavily into the torrent, which swallowed him up as if he were already a lifeless mass.

## XX

The principal dining-room was one of the parts of the château which Madame de Bergenheim's modern tastes and spirit of innovation had respected. Situated as it was on the ground-floor, with windows looking on the court-yard, it was a sort of complement to the portrait-gallery. It was an equally pompous and gloomy apartment, with the same style of decoration and the same chestnut wainscoting, which time had made as rich and dark as mahogany. The ceiling was divided into a multitude of panels by heavy timbers intersected by other smaller ones, set between them as the ribs are set into the



spinal column. Bunches of grapes were roughly carved at the angles of the main beams, and were connected by a vine with which a by no means skilful hand had decorated each panel. This carving, probably allegorical, represented a great number of small figures half hidden under the leaves, astride the grapes, climbing along the vine-stalks, all of which might have been taken for cherubs or cupids at the pleasure of the beholder. To tell the truth, thanks to the artist's lack of skill and the dark hue of the wood, these diminutive personages resembled rats eating the grapes rather than a party of angels gathering the harvest in the heavenly Jerusalem, which was the designer's probable purpose.

If, at first sight, the two rooms seemed strikingly alike, their movable ornamentation was in no less striking contrast. The family portraits on the first floor were replaced on the ground-floor by a collection of stags' antlers, mingled with hunting-horns, crossed hunting-knives, stacks of fowling-pieces, and hunting trophies of every sort. On great occasions, the antlers, many of which were furnished with gilded sconces, reinforced the chandelier suspended from the centre of the ceiling. Each of those curious candelabra had its history, connected with some famous hunt, and faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. When they were all lighted, their rays were reflected, with many odd deflections, by the stacks of weapons, the huge horns, and the carved work of the wainscoting, and surrounded the entire room with a girdle of brilliancy as picturesque as it was unusual.

A mantel-piece in gray granite, polished like marble, and with a shelf higher than the head of a man of ordinary



height, projected more than five feet into the room on the side opposite the windows. A square of red bricks came out as far into the floor. This last was by way of precaution, without doubt, against the danger of fire, naturally greater with the enormous fires formerly in vogue, of which the one blazing on the hearth on the occasion to which we are about to refer was no unworthy example. A back-log, whose chips would have warmed a poor Parisian household half the winter, flanked by a number of smaller logs, rested upon a pair of copper andirons of an odd pattern, probably the masterpiece of some artist in one of the smithies that abound in the valleys of the Vosges. These andirons terminated in two devils' heads armed with curved horns; their jaws, yawning in ghastly fashion, seemed ready to swallow the feet of all persons who might undertake to enjoy the warmth from the fire. There was nothing remarkable about the rest of the chimney-piece, except the following inscription cut in the keystone, and made more prominent by gilding half blackened by the smoke :

“ A flammis Gehennæ  
Libera nos, Domine ! ”

This prayer, with the demons of the hearth and its roasting fire, composed a sermon on hell more impressive than the eloquence of Bridaine or Bourdaloue. Amid the jets of blue, yellow, and red flames, which darted hissing from the mass of burning wood, the two andirons, their brilliancy maintained by frequent polishing, really resembled two of Beelzebub's imps waiting for the soul of a sinner to make it dance in

the furnace. There was something lugubrious in the sight, something that contrasted strangely with the hospitable ideas ordinarily aroused by the chimney-corner of a dining-room. It seemed as if the author of the inscription, with some satirical purpose or other in his mind, had undertaken to parody the *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, of Belshazzar's banquet, and to disturb the digestion of the guests who should succeed one another about that hearth from generation to generation.

On the evening in question the guests seated about the oval table in front of the fire-place seemed entirely indifferent to the religious ideas that had perhaps scourged the consciences of their predecessors on the same spot. Enjoyment of the good cheer, enhanced by the fatigues of the day and seasoned by the bright, uncertain light of the fire, absorbed their attention too exclusively to give them leisure for any other thought. They were for the most part plunged, body and soul, and over head and ears, in the joys of a supper, hearty rather than dainty, every dish of which was noteworthy for its positive, substantial, abundant excellence, essentially in harmony with the supernatural appetites to be expected of a round dozen of hunters.

None of the ladies of the château were present at the repast; this custom, copied to some extent from the English, had been adopted by the baroness for the suppers which ordinarily brought to a close her husband's hunting-parties. On those days, she absented herself from the table, whether because she found it too tedious a task to preside at interminable sessions, where the wiles of the hare, the death of the hind, and the great exploits of the pack were the invariable subjects of

discussion ; or because she chose, by her absence, to remove all restraint from cavaliers, more accomplished, as a general rule, in bringing down a partridge or emptying a flagon, than in paying court to a woman of the world. It is probable that her thoughtfulness was duly appreciated by those who were its beneficiaries, and that they felt grateful to her in no slight degree, notwithstanding the deep regret always expressed at *the absence of the ladies* ; that was the official phrase. As they generally came to the table dropping with fatigue, drenched with rain or perspiration, dying with hunger, their costumes as completely disordered as their stomachs, they were not likely to waste much time in regretting the yoke that etiquette imposes on the most shameless of libertines in the presence of a hostess. They abandoned themselves, therefore, as a general rule, to the enjoyment of the festival, with that relaxation of body and mind whose charms can be appreciated by everybody who has passed a single afternoon with a game-bag slung over his shoulder.

The supper had reached that stage which has no exact name in gastronomical science, and during which the methodical arrangements and learned theories of the maitre d'hôtel are constantly violated by the revolutionary caprices of the guests. The dessert was served before the *entremets* were removed. Some of the more substantial dishes still held out here and there like impregnable redoubts, despite the reiterated assaults they were forced to undergo from one or two lingering eaters, inheritors of Gargantua's appetite. The repast resembled a horse-race, when the horses are scattered all over the course at the last turn, straggling along at irregular intervals,

according to the strength of their legs. The diners, the super-eaters we should say, had proceeded in like manner with unequal teeth, according to the ardor or staying quality of their appetites, combined with the capacity of their stomachs. Already the majority were seeking to revive the paralysis of their sense of taste with the saline tang of Roquefort cheese or the dissolvent pulp of the Saint-Germain pear, while the rear-guard were still picking at the truffled livers of a Strasbourg pie. The same variation reigned upon the sea ; the red sea, be it understood. Some, sober by preference or necessity, were still drowning the simple Mâcon of the first course in a double portion of water, while the greater number were quaffing the vintages of Bordeaux and the Rhine in beakers usually devoted to Alsatian beer. For, in certain provinces of Cocagne, where the hearty drinking of our ancestors is perpetuated, the decreasing size of the cups in inverse ratio to the quantity of liquid they contain is viewed with sovereign contempt. All the little refinements of table service, invented by modern parsimony, are proscribed as fatal to real enjoyment ; the half-dozen glass thimbles that are placed beside every cover on fashionable tables seem a fallacious superfluity. To a great number of provincial gourmands, more hearty than refined in their tastes, the unchangeable size of glasses is a custom which has the authority of a dogma.

Among the most fervent proselytes of this riotous religion, Marillac, with eyes sparkling and cheeks more aflame than usual, easily took a place in the front rank. Seated between the fat notary and another jolly brother, who by their example and their constant invitations would have made a bishop

tipsy, he emptied glass upon glass, red after white and white after red, to an accompaniment of laughter growing even more uproarious, of jokes and witticisms of all sorts. His head became lighter from moment to moment amid libations intended to refresh his palate, without his detecting the conspiracy entered into by his neighbors, who thought it a great joke to drink a Parisian dandy under the table. However, he was not the only one who allowed himself to be enticed upon the slippery incline that ends in the fascinating abyss of drunkenness. The majority of the guests shared his imprudent *abandon* and his constantly increasing excitement. From one end of the table to the other, they vied with one another in bacchanalian demonstrations that promised something very like a debauch before the entertainment was at an end.

Amid those flushed cheeks beneath which the wine seemed to circulate with the blood, amid those eyes gleaming with a heavy, factitious brilliancy, amid this disorderly pantomime which was so opposed to the tranquil habits of the pantomimists, that one would have said that Italian arms were attached to Alsatian bodies, two faces stood out in marked contrast to the reckless expansiveness of the others. At the centre of the table, the baron fulfilled the duties of host with a sort of nervous excitement that might well have passed for genuine gaiety in the eyes of his guests, who were in no condition to study his features ; but an observer whose blood was cool would soon have removed the mask and have understood that his violent efforts at jesting and good humor were intended to dissemble some horrible suffering. From time to

time he would stop suddenly in the middle of a phrase or a laugh ; the muscles of his face would relax as if the spring that worked them had broken ; his expression would become savage and threatening ; he would sink back in his chair and sit motionless, deaf to all that was going on about him, the victim of some mysterious obsession which he was powerless to resist. Suddenly it would seem as if he awoke from a bad dream ; he would shake himself with a convulsive effort, and plunge into the conversation with some sharp, incisive, but incoherent remark ; he would encourage the noisy humor of his guests, incite them to do the foolish things that drunkenness suggests, and himself set the example ; then the same unknown thought would again overspread his features with a threatening light, and he would fall back into the tortures of a reverie which, to judge from their external reflection, must have been horrible indeed.

Among the guests, a single one, sitting almost opposite Bergenheim, seemed to be in the secret of his preoccupation and studied its symptoms with hidden but profound attention. Gerfaut, for it was he, brought to this scrutiny an intense interest which reacted upon his own face ; whether the general animation made the uniform coloring of his flesh more noticeable, or some restrained emotion drew the blood from his cheeks by concentrating it around the heart, certain it is that he was paler than usual. His features seemed changed, and his brow was frequently furrowed by wrinkles of thought or suffering. There was a sort of complicity between his restless watchfulness and Christian's moody abstraction. Unknown to the baron, a common thought was tormenting both these

men with its poisoned darts, as the serpent in the Laocoön group envelops one of its victims in its folds while it buries its teeth in the side of one of the others.

"When I saw that the hare was making for the path above," said one of the guests, a handsome old man of sixty, with gray hair and ruddy cheeks, "I ran toward the last clearing to wait for his return. I was very sure he would come out of your hands safe and sound, notary. Every one knows the inscription on your gun: *Homicide thou shalt not be!*"

"You mean *haricide* or *leporicide*," cried Marillac from the other end of the table; "come, notary, defend yourself: one, two! on guard!"

"Monsieur de Camier," the sportsman whose skill was thus aspersed replied good-humoredly, "I don't pretend to be as good a shot as you. I never killed such big game as you brought down on your last hunt."

This response was an allusion to a slight misadventure which had recently befallen the first speaker, whose near-sightedness had led him to mistake a calf for a deer. The laughers, who had at first made merry at the notary's expense, turned against his adversary.

"How many pairs of boots did you make with your game?" asked one of them.

"Monsieur de Camier," cried the artist, "it's lucky for you that this isn't Egypt in the days of the Pharaohs; they would have made an auto-da-fé of you in honor of the bull Apis."

"Messieurs, to return to the subject," said a young man, whose smug features aspired to an austere and imposing expression, "thus far we can form only vague conjectures as to the



road this Lambernier took to make his escape. That, allow me to tell you, is more important than the notary's hare or Monsieur de Camier's calf."

At that remark, Bergenheim, who had taken no part in the conversation for some time, straightened up in his chair.

"A glass of Sauterne," said he abruptly, inviting his neighbors to drink.

Gerfaut glanced at him for an instant out of the corner of his eye, and then looked away as if he feared his action would be noticed.

"The king's attorney has scented a culprit," said the notary; "there's no chance of his dropping the scent. The case will come up at the next assizes, I suppose?"

Monsieur de Camier placed his half-filled glass on the table.

"To the devil with the jury!" he cried testily; "I am summoned for the first session, and I will bet my head I shall be drawn. How pleasant that will be! To leave my house and my business in the middle of winter to sit for a fortnight trying a parcel of vagabonds I don't know from Adam or Eve. That's another one of the joys of your constitutional government. A heap of nonsense copied from the Greeks and palmed off on us as sublime discoveries. The Frenchman ought to be tried by his equals! Am I a thief's equal? Go to Bicêtre or Toulon for your jurors if you want to be consistent. What do we pay judges for if we landed proprietors have got to do their work for them? The old parliaments that people cried out so much against were worth your bear-gardens of assize courts a hundred times over."



At this outburst, Marillac, who was amusing himself all alone experimenting on *low F* as he peeled an apple, broke off his symphony, to the great relief of a greyhound lying at his feet, whose nerves were sadly irritated by it.

"Monsieur de Camier," said he, "you are a great land-owner, a partisan of Charles X., and eligible to the Chamber of Deputies, you fast on Friday, you attend Mass at your parish church, and now and then you shoot a calf instead of a deer. I esteem and respect you; but allow me to tell you that you have just given us an antediluvian fossil of a speech. What about Calas, monsieur? and Sirven? and the Chevalier de Labarre?"

"Aye, and Lesurque, monsieur?" retorted the country-gentleman, with no less animation.

"Messieurs," said the king's attorney in his court-room voice, emphasizing every sentence with his forefinger, "on the one hand, my profound respect for the ancient parliaments, those worthy models of what the magistracy should be, those incorruptible defenders of the privileges of the nation, and on the other hand, my equally great veneration for the institutions evolved by our constitutional policy, make it impossible for me to adopt an absolute opinion. However, without presuming to declare too unreservedly the superiority of the old system to the new, and to indulge in reckless criticism of the latter, I think I may, to a certain extent, express my agreement with Monsieur de Camier. My position gives me a better opportunity than any one to study the advantages and disadvantages of the jury system, and I am bound to admit that, although they are substantial advantages, the drawbacks

are no less incontestable. We must agree, messieurs, that jurors do not always rise to the level of their duties; they sometimes bend beneath the weight of the mandate imposed upon them by public vengeance. There is never a session of the assizes at which the action of the law is not paralyzed by an indulgence which I might better describe as weakness."

"It's the prosecutions of the press that give you the cholera morbus," interposed the republican voice of Marillac, made more blatant by repeated bumpers.

"No; it's the acquittal of three thieves that the public prosecutor hasn't yet been able to digest," said the notary, with a knowing wink, as he slowly inhaled a pinch of snuff.

"The plainest case of robbery, the most clearly demonstrated at the trial," the young magistrate replied, with a sad and reproachful accent; "depositions clear as the day, prisoners contradicting themselves at every word, an alibi ground to powder, an overwhelming mass of testimony, and it all resulted in a verdict of not guilty!—You were on the jury, Monsieur de Bergenheim; doubtless you voted for acquittal, for the verdict was rendered by a vote of nine to three. So the malefactors are thrown back upon society, ready at any moment to shake it to its foundations again by the exercise of their criminal practices. Messieurs, messieurs, beware! this is not the way to preserve order and the public peace. If you wish to be protected against the assassin's dagger, do not paralyze the sword of Themis."

"Oh! oh! Themis indeed!" echoed the artist, turning to his left-hand neighbor; "your public prosecutor can justly boast of being a mythological soporific."

Bergenheim had raised his head when the orator addressed him.

"I voted for conviction, monsieur," he cried in a strangely altered voice, when that functionary had finished his harangue; "I give you my word, I voted for conviction.—I respect the laws.—Most certainly the guilty must be punished.—Fill your glasses, messieurs, I give you Madame de Camier's health!"

He emptied his glass by way of example, passed his hand across his brow several times, and then looked about with a stern, determined expression, that might have been taken for a challenge.

"Can it be that the master *della casa* has put his foot in the lord's vineyard?" Monsieur de Camier asked his neighbor; "he has a most extraordinary manner to-night. What an idea, to drink my poor wife's health, when she's been in bed for a year and a half!"

"Impossible!" replied the person addressed. "You might as well say that a hogshead can get tipsy. I know that he's just the man to drink us all under the table and then go hunting."

"Pshaw! I know at least one who can hold his own with him," retorted the old gentleman, whose rubicund nose and cheeks proclaimed him a tried champion in bacchanalian combats—to adopt the mythological style of the king's attorney.

"But if my memory serves me aright," said the notary, addressing that official, "in the affair you were speaking of, the stolen property had disappeared; there was no *corpus delicti*, and before a jury the *corpus delicti* is of the greatest importance."

“To whom, do you say?” rejoined the magistrate, happy to obtain a fair opening in a discussion within his province; “one of the great vices of the jury results from the habit most jurymen have fallen into, of demanding material proofs, so to speak, to satisfy their minds. As a general rule, they do not consider themselves sufficiently enlightened until they have assured themselves *de visu* of the reality of the alleged crime. The chain of circumstances and their interpretation, the rigorous deductions drawn from them, the moral evidence resulting from argument, in a word, all the philosophical and logical portions of the trial, escape them or are beyond their intelligence. They are like Saint Thomas, they must see the wounds. But I trust that, in Lambernier’s case, there will be no contest over the existence of the *corpus delicti*: it is there, flagrant and palpitating; the victim’s hip is bleeding still.”

“Tra de ri de ra,” cried the artist, striking his knife against his glass and a bottle alternately, as if he were playing the triangle.—“Nobody can deny that we select subjects of conversation that are wild and bewildering in their gaiety. Really, we are a cheerful lot of boon companions; sitting opposite me here is Bergenheim, with a face like Macbeth’s when he saw Banquo’s ghost; and my friend Gerfaut yonder is drinking pure water with profound melancholy.—*Tête Dieu!* messeigneurs, a truce to the drolleries of the assizes. Cut off your Lambernier’s head, and let us hear no more about him.

“ ‘Le vin, le jeu, les belles,  
Voilà mes seuls amours.’ ”

"*Parbleu !* monsieur would be a juror after your own heart," said Monsieur de Camier to the austere magistrate ; "it's a pity that he is not summoned for the next assizes in my place ; he talks about cutting off heads as glibly as most men do about a week in jail."

"The death-penalty is not applicable in the case at bar," rejoined the king's attorney, who could not easily be induced to lay aside the judicial phraseology ; "the penalty attached to Lambernier's act is dependent upon the future development as to his victim's condition. If the wound does not cause illness or incapacity to work for the space of three weeks, the penalty is reduced to imprisonment for a period of from one month to two years, or from two years to five, according as the question of premeditation is decided. If the victim is incapacitated for labor during the aforesaid length of time, the punishment naturally increases in proportion to the extent of the damage ; and, messieurs, by being incapacitated, you must not understand, as some people might do, absolute inability to do work of any sort, but inability to follow his occupation ; now, as the coachman's occupation ordinarily consists in sitting upon the box and driving horses, and as the wound he has received is located in the lower portion of the hip, a part of the body which comes directly in contact with the seat, it is probable that this wound, which is very deep and may have reached some nerve, will not be cured within the prescribed term of three weeks, and consequently will result in the incapacity to work mentioned in the Penal Code. In that case, and assuming premeditation, as to which there seems to be no doubt, the culprit would be sentenced

to hard labor for a period of years:—Articles 309 and 310 of the Code.”

“For God’s sake, leave us in peace, magistrate,” cried Marillac in a voice of thunder, half rising from his seat; “do you undertake to make us believe that it will take three weeks to cure a scratch in a mass of fat as thick as the rump of an ox? And as for premeditation, I deny it: *Nego*.”

To give more emphasis to his opinion, he emptied his glass and brought it down noisily on the table, casting a defiant glance at the last speaker, which seemed to challenge him to a bout at judicial forensics. At this interruption, the learned magistrate gave a sort of neigh, like Job’s horse at the sound of the trumpet.

“Premeditation, monsieur,” he continued, with a happy mingling of gravity and fervor,—“premeditation is so easy to establish, that you will be the first to admit it after a moment’s reflection. I will content myself with proving it to your satisfaction by two methods in the most triumphant manner.

“The first is based upon the presence of the accused in the place where the assault was committed, the second upon the nature of the weapon he used. (1) After Monsieur le Baron de Bergenheim, here present, had positively forbidden Lambernier to set foot on his estate, it is evident that only some weighty motive, some plan previously laid, could have induced him to disregard that order, to defy that prohibition. Now, if that motive is not explained by the accused, I will not say plausibly, but in a clear, peremptory way, it must necessarily, *ipso facto*, be interpreted against him, and explained by the subsequent fact of the crime, with which it is

connected by a logical and irrefutable chain of reasoning. You will observe that I simply call attention to this method. (2) As to the weapon used by Lambernier, if it were a clasp-knife, I should be the first to acknowledge that no presumption of premeditation could be drawn from it, as many people of the working-class are accustomed to carry knives of that description which they use for cutting their food when they eat their dinner in the open air. In that respect, the depositions of the witnesses afford no sufficient information. The coachman received the blow without noticing the weapon that struck him ; Léonard Rousselet saw a blade glistening in the murderer's hand, but he cannot describe its shape accurately. The prosecution, therefore, lacks satisfactory proof on that point ; but an examination of the wound, the condition of which I have myself ascertained, proves that it must have been made with a sharp narrow blade of triangular shape, something like the kind of sword called a *carrelet*, or like a bayonet, or certain varieties of the stiletto or poniard ; and everything points to the inference that the instrument used belongs to this last class. Now I ask you, gentlemen of the jury, does not the mere carrying of such a weapon, prohibited by the police regulations and entirely contrary to the habits of a man of Lambernier's station,—does it not prove a purpose on his part to make use of it ? And upon whom could he have formed that purpose to make use of it, if not upon the coachman, with whom he had already had several altercations, which had aroused bad blood between them, with the deplorable result that is before you ? I should consider that I was wasting the time of the court and jury if I insisted further upon this point."



The young magistrate's imagination, excited by copious libations quite at variance with his habitual abstemiousness, had transported him in spirit to the assize court at the close of his harangue. While he was taking breath, the artist turned his face to the right and to the left, trying to attract the attention of his neighbors by a confidential smile.

"The king's attorney," he whispered, "abuses his privilege of strutting about like a peacock, and, besides that, he's beginning to see double. See how I will pull him to pieces."

After this preamble, Marillac emptied his glass and rose. Resting his elbow in the palm of his left hand, and gesticulating with his forearm as if he were sprinkling his audience with holy water, he began in a voice as clear as that of *L'Intimé* :

"I will crave the prosecutor's permission to refute his arguments in a few words.—*Et in Arcadia ego* ! or, if you prefer: *Anch'io son pittore*, or again, to use your prosaic, parliamentary tongue: *Et moi aussi, j'ai fait mon droit*.<sup>2</sup> You remember, Octave, what happy days those were ! The *Chaumière du Montparnasse* ! *Frascati* ! the pit at the Odéon !—Down with the *claqueurs* ! put your card in your hat ! Red, even and pay !—On great days the little *Rocher de Cancale* ; fifteen-sou dinners at Flicoteaux's in days of adversity. And woman's love !—*Æterni Dei* !—What women and what love !—Octave, do you remember Anastasie ? Not the little blonde ; the lovely brunette on Rue de la Paix ; the one I taught to smoke, the one who struck me twice at the Bal des Sceaux, because I danced with Henriette. You don't remember Anastasie ?—my lovely tigress Anastasie ?"



"It would seem that she was very amiable, married or single," said the notary, filling the artist's glass; "her health!"

"Her health!" Marillac repeated; "but, notary," he continued, glancing at his neighbor with a melancholy air, "if you propose to drink the health of all the enchanting creatures who have gilded with their love the life of the man who speaks to you, it would be as well to bring up a whole cask and throw you into it alive like Clarence; for I have lived fast and hard. You bourgeois and provincials can't realize that broad, tumultuous, highly-spiced, luxurious life. I am a man with a good square foundation; but I sometimes have to do penance for the exaggerated exuberance of my organism. There are moments when I bend beneath the weight of the too full life I have led, when the overpowering current of my memories plunges me in gloomy dejection, and this is one of those moments. It seems to me that I have a veil around my brow and a stifling weight upon my chest."

"*Pardieu!*" said Monsieur de Camier at the other end of the table, "considering that he has drunk four or five bottles, it's not strange that his sight's a little dim and his respiration labored. However, wine doesn't take away his power of speech."

"He is most uncivil!" observed the king's attorney, who was extremely annoyed to have the artist take the burden of the conversation from his shoulders.

Without replying to this critical remark, Marillac cast a languishing look around the table, a look in which the first flames of drunkenness were kindled, and continued his discourse, swaying like a poplar in the wind.

“A refined and consuming sensitiveness is a terrible scourge when it falls to the lot of a man of magisterial mind, large of brain and heart and shoulders. That man’s destiny is the destiny of the meteor that comes in collision with the planets travelling calmly in their orbits, and shatters them. The creatures of love whom he meets in this vale of tears are shattered, earthen pots that they are, against him, iron pot that he is. For his kisses burn, his embraces suffocate, his caresses corrode.—And I belong to that race of exalted, satanic men, fallen angels, square at the base. My youth is a rolling-mill, wherein the lives of innumerable women are crushed one by one.—But the hour of remorse draws nigh; yes, the hour of remorse.—Like Don Giovanni, I see the ghosts of my victims pass before me,—a ghastly, threatening procession.—Isaure! Henriette! Anastasie!—Caroline!—a full battalion on a war footing; six companies in the centre, grenadiers and light infantry. Anastasie is in the grenadiers on account of her little moustaches,—great gods!—did I adore her little moustaches enough! Don Giovanni!—I am Don Giovanni!

“‘Don Giovanni à cenar teco  
M’invitasti e son venuto.’

“*Pentiti?*—*No!*—*No!*—No, ten thousand devils! Marillac does not repent. Open all the mouths of all your hells, I care as little for them as for my old slippers, for I am a man with a square foundation.—The beginning of the *Requiem* that has been stuck on at the end of *Don Giovanni* at the Opéra, doesn’t produce the anticipated effect.—No confusion in

species!—Dramatic music on the stage, religious music in the church.

“ ‘Requiem æternam donas eis, Domine.’ ”

At this verse, howled in a lugubrious voice, there was a general outcry from all parts of the table. Loud exclamations, knives hammering on glasses and bottles, noises of all sorts, called the orator to order.

“Monsieur Marillac,” shouted the king’s attorney in a mocking tone, dominating the uproar with his assize voice, “you expressed a purpose of refuting me. It seems to me that the fervor of improvisation has carried you somewhat far from your subject.”

The artist looked at him for a moment with an air of amazement.

“Did I have something to say to you?” he asked; “in that case, I stand by what I said. Simply be kind enough to tell me what we were talking about.”

“About Lambernier and the question of premeditation,” the notary whispered to him, filling his glass.—“Courage! you extemporize better than Berryer. If you exert your powers, the king’s attorney is buried.”

Marillac thanked his neighbor with a smile and a movement of the head which seemed to say: “Rely on me.”—He then emptied his glass with the imprudent recklessness that had been for some time past carrying him at railroad speed toward drunkenness; but, by a strange phenomenon, which is frequently observable in such cases, the fresh libation, instead of flooring him entirely, gave him something like clear-headedness for a moment.

“The indictment of the officers of the crown,” he retorted with the self-possession of an old advocate, “is based upon two facts: (1) The unexplained presence of the accused on the spot where the crime was committed; (2) the nature of the weapon he used.—Two simple but unanswerable suggestions will level with the ground the whole structure attempted to be built upon these two presumptions. (1) Lambernier had an appointment at the precise place and time at which the assault of which he was guilty was committed; this fact will be proved by witnesses and established beyond a peradventure at the trial. His presence, therefore, is fully explained without any possibility of its being interpreted against him; (2) the attorney has himself admitted that the carrying of a weapon Lambernier was accustomed to use could not, for that reason, be invoked in support of the theory of premeditation; now, that is precisely the case before us. As a matter of fact, the weapon was not a *carrelet*, nor a bayonet, nor a stiletto, nor anything that the king’s attorney’s fertile imagination can suggest; it was a simple tool used by the accused in his trade, the presence of which in his pocket is as easy to understand as the presence of a snuff-box in that of my neighbor the notary, who takes snuff twenty times a minute. That weapon, messieurs, was a pair of joiner’s compasses.”

“A pair of compasses!” exclaimed several voices in unison.

“A pair of compasses!” cried the baron, turning half-round in his chair and gazing earnestly at the artist. With a gesture he could not repress, he put his hand to his waistcoat pocket and hurriedly withdrew it again as it came in contact with the

joiner's compasses, which had remained there since the tragic scene of the Roche du Gué.

"A pair of iron compasses," the artist repeated, "about ten inches long, more or less, when the legs are closed."

"Explain yourself, monsieur," cried the king's attorney in a tone of deep interest; "did you see the assault, pray? In that case, you will be summoned as witness for the defence. Justice is impartial, messieurs; Themis has not two scales."

"To the devil with Themis!" retorted Marillac angrily; "you must come from Timbuctoo to employ such gimcrack metaphors."

"Make your statement, witness; I call upon you to make your statement," retorted the magistrate in his turn, his growing intoxication making him as dignified and solemn as the artist was maudlin or tempestuous.

"I have nothing to state, for I saw nothing."

At this, the baron drew a long breath as if the words restored to his lungs the air that they lacked.

"But I saw!" said Gerfaut to himself, noticing the anxiety depicted on Bergenheim's features; and he relapsed into deep thought.

"I reason by hypothesis and presumption," said the artist. "Some days ago, I had a slight altercation with this Lambernier, and, except for my trusty Genoa blade, it might very well have ended like the one to-day, for the heathen seemed to me as ready to draw his weapon as Saint Peter."

He thereupon told the story of his meeting with Lambernier, but the consideration due Mademoiselle Gobillot made it necessary for him to keep silent on so many points and to

resort so frequently to mystification and circumlocution, that what he said was hardly intelligible to his auditors, and in the midst of it his brain, which was filled with a confused jumble of ideas, went altogether astray.

"*Basta !*" he cried by way of conclusion, falling heavily back on his chair.—"Not another word, for the Mogul's empire. Give me something to drink, notary, for you're the only one who has any consideration for me. The thing that is clearest to my mind is that I am ten louis to the good by the rascal's misadventure."

These words caught the baron's attention, and reminded him of what the joiner said when he handed him the letter.

"Ten louis!" he exclaimed abruptly, gazing at Marillac, as if he wished to run him through with his eyes.

"Two hundred francs, if you prefer. A downright fraud. But enough said, *mio caro*, you make a mistake if you think to make me tell tales. Oh, no! I'm not the man to allow myself to be tangled up. I am mute and silent as the tomb."

Bergenheim did not press the matter, but settled back in his chair, and let his head fall forward on his breast. He sat for some time, lost in thought, striving to connect the obscure words he had just heard with Lambernier's incomplete revelations. With the exception of Gerfaut, who did not lose a single movement on his host's part, and who studied every variation of his countenance with the interest of a physician watching the death-agony, the guests, all more or less absorbed by their own sensations, either paid no attention to the strange conduct of the master of the house, or, like Monsieur de Camier, attributed it to the benumbing influence of wine.

The conversation resumed its noisy, discordant, disputatious course, interrupted every moment by the uproarious vagaries of some more exhilarated guest; for, toward the close of a repast at which sobriety has not been queen, every one is inclined to impose upon his fellows the despotism of his own drunkenness, and the meaningless chatter of his own special hallucinations. Marillac was not backward about carrying off the prize among the most loquacious, thanks to the strength of his baritone lungs, the untiring volubility of his southern tongue, and a sort of absurd originality in his remarks which sometimes compelled the attention even of his adversaries. At last, he was left in almost undisputed possession of the battle-field, and discharged volleys of vinous eloquence despotically right and left, like a forty-eight pounder that has, by its own unaided efforts, dismounted a whole battery.

"It's pitiful," he suddenly exclaimed in the midst of his triumph, casting a haughty, disdainful glance around the table, "it's really pitiful, messieurs, to hear your conversation. Nobody could imagine anything more prosaic, more pitiful, more bourgeois. It's concentrated grocer in the third degree. Would you not be graciously pleased to devote your talents to a discussion of a more elevated order? up, poets, *sursum corda!* isn't this a literary party? let us join hands, and talk of art and poetry. I am thirsty for artistic conversation, for a draught of wit and intelligence."

"You must drink if you are thirsty," said the notary, filling his glass to the brim.

The artist emptied it at a draught, and continued in a languishing voice, gazing at his stout neighbor with a tender leer.



"I begin our artistic seance: 'Know'st thou the land where the lemon-trees bloom?'"

"It's hotter there than here," replied the notary, who was not familiar with Mignon's song; and, with a mischievous laugh, he bestowed a wink upon his neighbors, which seemed to signify:

"I settled him that time."

Marillac leaned toward him with the innocent air of a lamb offering his head to the butcher, and sympathetically pressed his hands.

"O poet," he resumed, "do you not, at evening, at the twilight hour, feel, as I do, a vague longing for the warm, perfumed life of the East? Will you say adieu to this ungrateful fatherland, and sail with me toward the land where the blue heavens are reflected in the blue ocean? Venice! the Rialto and the Bridge of Sighs, the Lido and Saint Mark's, the gondoliers singing Tasso's verses, and the horrible Austrian *schlague*! Rome! the Coliseum and Saint Peter's; the Vatican and the Pantheon; the yellow Tiber and the red cardinals; the melancholy Roman Campagna and the *malaria*!—Naples! the *lazzaroni* and Vesuvius, San Carlo and the Chiaja!—Deuce take Italy! I know it by heart. Next!—Let us go to Constantinople rather, I am thirsty for sultanas, I am thirsty for houris, I am thirsty——"

"*Parbleu!* drink if you are thirsty."

"Gladly. I never say *no*. I am thirsty for exceeding great pleasure, for I am a man with a square foundation. I despise love in a cotton night-cap, and I adore danger. Danger is my life. I want silk ladders as long as Jacob's; citadels



to escalade; tiny feet crunching dry leaves on moonlight nights; corrosive kisses, always at night, to the beard of husbands and black eunuchs. Do eunuchs wear beards? no matter. Bearded or not, I despise them. I want for a canopy to my bed a steel arch consisting of five hundred poniards; dost thou not understand, O poet, the piquancy of the poniard!—What an execrable pun!<sup>3</sup>—Never mind, let us go to Constantinople. I will carry off the seraglio, and call myself Marillac Bey or Marillac Pasha, or perhaps Sultan Marillac.—Ha! ha! famous!

“ ‘D’un bel uso di turchia.’ ”

“I pray you, don’t urge him to drink any more,” said Gerfaut to the notary, on whose other side he was sitting.

The artist gazed at his friend for some time with an expression of great gravity, then said to him, with an interested air:

“You are right not to want to drink any more, Octave. I was just going to advise you not to. You have already had too much to-day, and I greatly fear that you will be ill, for you are in feeble health; you’re not like me, a man with a square foundation.—Imagine, messeigneurs, that this pale-cheeked young man whom I have the honor to present to you, Monsieur le Vicomte de Gerfaut, gentleman of Gascogne, a roué by profession, and a literary star of the first order, is afflicted by nature with a stomach which has nothing in common with the ostrich’s; he has to take the greatest care of it. So we water it principally with seltzer, and feed it on the white meat of chicken. Furthermore, we keep the priceless phenomenon between two woollen coverlids over a kettle of

boiling water. He's a great poet in a *bain-marie*. I am a very great poet myself."

"And so am I, I hope," the notary interrupted.

"You are Stenio ; for, messieurs, formerly there were poets in verse only ; to-day, they have put them in prose. Indeed, there are some who are poets neither in verse nor prose, silent poets who have never taken any one into their confidence and who selfishly feed on their poetry as the bear feeds on the fat of his paws. It's a very simple matter to be a poet, provided that you have an indescribable feeling of intoxication in your soul, that you hear inexpressible thoughts boiling in your expansive forehead, and that you feel a noble man's heart beating very hard beneath the left nipple in your white woman's breast."

"He's as tipsy [*gris*] as thirty-six thousand men," observed Monsieur de Camier, loud enough to be overheard.

Marillac turned majestically toward the interrupter.

"Old man," said he, "you are the one who's tipsy. The old man is gray [*gris*]' when he's not white ; the partridge is gray when he's not red ; the ass and the mouse are invariably gray. Besides, the word isn't civil ; if you had said inebriated [*ivre*], I shouldn't have taken it up. *Ivre*, in Latin *ebrius*, and in Italian *ubriaco*.

"'Ubriaco ! ma perche ?

Perche d'un che poco in se.'"

Prolonged laughter, aroused by a voice in which the fumes of wine caused the most extraordinary modulations, interrupted the singer in the middle of a measure. He glared

threateningly about as if in search of some one upon whom he might vent his wrath, and put his hand to his hip, assuming a swaggering pose.

"Gently! my masters," said he; "if any one of you maintains that I am inebriated, *ubriaco*, I tell him to his face that he has lied, and I hold him for a swash-buckler, a king of thieves, a vagabond, an impostor,—a—a—an academician!" he concluded, with a roar of laughter; for he fancied the sorry jesters would be crushed by that last sledge-hammer blow.

"*Parbleu!* your friend takes his wine cheerfully, at all events," said the notary to Gerfaut, "while Bergenheim over there, although he hasn't drunk much, acts very much as if he were attending a funeral. I thought he had a stronger head than that."

Marillac's voice, louder than ever, drowned Octave's reply.

"It's extremely fine, on my word! They have all drunk like cab-drivers, and they assert that I'm the one that's drunk. Very good! I challenge all of you; who's the man that wants to argue with me? *quidquid dixeris argumentabor, doctissime condiscipule*. Will you discuss art, literature, politics, medicine, music, philosophy, archæology, jurisprudence, magnetism——"

"Jurisprudence!" cried the king's attorney in a thick voice, emerging at that electrifying word from the torpid state into which the labor of digestion had cast him some time before; "let us talk of jurisprudence. What's your opinion of the last judgment of the Court of Cassation?"

"Would you like to have me give you an extemporaneous speech on the death-penalty or on temperance?" said Marillac,

paying no heed to the interruption; "shall I tell you about Robert Macaire? shall I sketch the plot of a five-act drama for you in five minutes? shall I tell you a story?"

"A story!" said a voice.

"A story! a story!" exclaimed most of the other guests in chorus.

"Speak, give your orders; it costs nothing to look," said the artist, rubbing his hands with a radiant air; "will you have a story of the Middle Ages? or the Renaissance? a Pompadour story? a real story? an imaginary story? an Oriental, humorous, physiological, or family story? I tell you beforehand that the family story is the most *rococo*."

"Give us the family story," said the same voices.

"Very good. Now will you have a Chinese, Arabian, Spanish, Jewish, or Indian story?"

"French!" cried the king's attorney.

"I am French, thou art French, he is French—— Magistrate, thy name is Chauvin.—So you shall have a French story."

Marillac rested his head on his hands and his elbows on the table, to collect his ideas. After a few moments' meditation, he raised his head and looked first at Bergenheim and then at Gerfaut with a strange smile.

"It will be very original," he muttered under his breath, as if in answer to his own thought, "it will be exceedingly original. It's an idea worth preserving for my first play, a scene like that of the players in *Hamlet*. If only I don't make it so true to life that he recognizes himself and begins to cry like Claudius: 'Give me some light!' torches at high noon!"

"Give us the story," said one of the guests, more impatient than the others.

"Presently," replied the artist, placing his elbows on the table once more. "You all know, messieurs, that the most difficult thing is to find the right title. In order not to keep you waiting, I will select one already known to you. My story will be called, then, if you please, *The Husband, the Wife, and the Lover*. I might have borrowed from Paul de Kock the title of another of his novels, except from motives of propriety. We are not all bachelors, and there is a wise saw that says we must never speak of a rope——"<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the extraordinary confusion of his ideas, the artist paused without finishing the quotation. The slight glimmering of sense that he still possessed told him that he was walking on dangerous ground and was on the point of committing an unpardonable indiscretion. Fortunately, the baron, whose mind was far away from the conversation, had paid no heed to his words; but Gerfaut, justly terrified by his friend's garrulity, shot a glance at him which contained most urgent, not to say most threatening, injunctions to be more prudent.

Marillac, vaguely conscious of his mistake, was as completely abashed by that glance as a scholar by the stern questioning of his teacher; he leaned in front of the notary, who separated him from Gerfaut, and said to the latter in a voice which he tried to render confidential, but which, despite his good intentions, was heard from one end of the table to the other:

"Never fear, Octave, I'll tell the story in ambiguous words, so that he won't see anything but the fire. It's a scene for a drama I have in my head."

"You will make yourself ill drinking and talking," retorted Gerfaut, with increasing anxiety; "be quiet, or else leave the table with me."

"Why, I tell you that I'll use ambiguous words, talk allegorically," replied the artist; "what do you take me for? I promise you that I will cover the thing up so that the devil himself wouldn't guess who were behind the masks."

"The story! the story!" cried several of the guests, who were entertained by the artist's incoherent chatter.

"Here we are," he said, resuming an upright position in his chair, not without difficulty, and heedless of his friend's persistent urging. "We will call it *The Husband, the Wife, and the Lover*, a French family story. The action takes place in a petty German court.—Hum!" he added, with a glance and a mischievous wink at Gerfaut,—“do you think the veil is thick enough?"

"No German court; you said it should be a French story," observed the king's attorney, who was inclined to harass and criticise the orator who had reduced him to silence.

"Well! this is a French story, the scene of which is laid in Germany," replied the narrator coolly.—“Do you undertake to teach me my trade, pray? Understand that nothing is so elastic as a German court; you can introduce anybody you please: I might bring in the Shah of Persia and the Emperor of China, and you wouldn't have the least little word to say. However, if you prefer an Italian court, it will be quite the same to me."

As there was no response to this conciliatory proposal, Marillac began by rolling his eyes so that only the whites could

be seen, as if he were looking for his words in the decorated panels of the ceiling.

"And the Princess Borinska walked slowly along the mystery-haunted avenue on the brink of the foaming torrent,——"

"Borinska! so she's a Pole, is she?" Monsieur de Camier interrupted.

"Oh! damnation, old man, don't cut my words in halves like that," cried the artist testily.

"That's no more than fair. Silence, all."

"You have the floor," said several auditors at once.

"——And she was pale and she heaved convulsive sighs, wringing her soft, warm hands, and a white pearl rolled from beneath the black lashes of her brown eyes, and——"

"Why, I pray to know, do you begin all your sentences with *and*?" inquired the king's attorney, with the finical purism of an inexorable critic.

"Because it is biblical and artless, and the artless and the biblical are far and away the most natural. Doesn't my diction impress you like a picture of Cimabue or Perugino?"

"It impresses me as a mass of illogical, ungrammatical sentences; it is clear that *and*, a conjunction, should only be used between the two words it connects."

"Take the yolk of an egg for your connection, and leave me in peace," retorted Marillac, with superb disdain. "You're a pettifogging lawyer, and I'm an artist; what have you and I in common?—I resume:—And he saw the lovely, pale young woman pass in the distance, pensive and bathed in tears as she was; and he said to Prince Borinski: 'O Prince,



the root of a fir-tree, against which I stumbled, has bruised my leg; permit me to return to the palace.' And Prince Borinski said to him: 'Do you not wish my guards to carry you in a palanquin?' And the sly dog of an Octave replied——"

"Your story hasn't any sense, and you are enough to weary a man to death," Gerfaut broke in abruptly. "Messieurs, are we to remain at table all night?"

He rose, but no one followed his example. Bergenheim, who had been listening to the artist's story for some moments, looked from one to the other of the friends with a lowering, watchful eye.

"Pray let him go on," said the young magistrate, with an ironical smile; "I like the idea of a palanquin at a German court. Doubtless that is what our friends the romanticists call local color.—Ha! ha!—O Racine!"

Marillac, refusing to be intimidated by Gerfaut's withering glare, continued, with true drunkard's obstinacy, in an increasingly uncertain voice:

"Haven't I promised to veil the allegory? You will make me angry before you've done. Aren't we both artists, men with square foundations? How do you suppose blockheads of bourgeois can understand us?—For understand, messeigneurs, I made a mistake in calling my lover Octave.—It's clear as daylight that his name's Boleslas—Boleslas Matalowski, from the duchy of Warsaw—wounded at Grochow. There's no more connection between him and my friend Octave than there is between my other friend Bergenheim and Prince Kalinski—Woginski—what the devil's my prince's name? a handsome reward to the man that will tell me my prince's name."

"You do very wrong to take advantage of his condition to make him talk more," Gerfaut interposed once more, stirred to the last degree of anxiety and alarm by these words.— "Keep quiet, I beseech you, and come with me," he added, and stooping over the obstinate story-teller, he took him by the arm to get him on his feet. This essay served only to irritate Marillac, instead of persuading him; he seized the edge of the table, and clung to it with all his strength, yelling like a pig that is being killed :

"No! five hundred and ninety-nine thousand times no! I propose to finish my story. President, keep order for me.— No lictors in the sanctuary of the laws.—Aha! you would prevent my speaking because you know I can tell a story better than you, and because I make an impression on my audience. You've never been able to catch my *chic*. Jealous! envious! I know you, serpent!"

"I beg you, if you love me, to listen to me," replied Gerfaut, who, as he leaned over his friend's shoulder, noticed with anxiety the keen attention the baron was giving to the discussion, and the sinister expression on his face.

"No! I said no!" roared the artist in a voice to bring down the ceiling, and emphasizing the word with the most horrible oath in the French language. He rose, roughly pushed Gerfaut aside, and leaned upon the table, laughing uproariously.

"Poets," said he, "take comfort and rejoice; you shall have your story in spite of all the serpents of envy. But give me something to drink, for my gullet's like a box of matches. No wine," he continued, at the sight of the notary armed

with a bottle and preparing to fill his glass. "That devilish wine makes me thirsty, instead of refreshing me ; besides, I'm as sober as Saint John the Baptist."

Gerfaut, with the desperate persistence of a man on the point of being drowned, seized him again by the arm, squeezing it as if he would bury his fingers in the flesh, and trying to fascinate him by the fixed, commanding gaze with which the physician in charge of a madhouse masters the frenzy of his patients. But the only reply he obtained to that mute and threatening entreaty was a vacant smile, and these words in a thick, unsteady voice :

"Give me something to drink, I say, Boleslas—Marinski—Graboski—I believe Satan has lighted his chafing-dish in my stomach."

The persons seated nearest the two friends could hear the hiss of rage that issued from Octave's tightly-closed lips. Suddenly he put out his hand, took a small carafe from a group of several in the middle of the table, and filled to the brim the glass Marillac was holding out to him.

"Thanks," said he, trying to stand erect upon his legs. "You're as obliging as a little angel. So don't you be afraid, your love's in no danger. I'm going to cover it all up for you with a *carabiné* veil.—Your health, vagabonds !"

He drank two-thirds of the contents of the glass, and put it back on the table ; then he smiled, and waved his hand to his auditors with royal courtesy ; but his mouth remained half-open as if his lips were petrified, his eyes increased in size to an abnormal degree, and their expression suddenly became haggard ; the hand he had extended fell to his side ; a

moment after, he himself stumbled and fell upon his chair, apparently stricken with apoplexy.

Gerfaut, who had not removed his eyes from him since he put the glass to his lips, and who had followed the different symptoms with indescribable anxiety, put his arms about him and held him up; but, notwithstanding the terror or the deep interest indicated by his prompt assistance, a long-drawn sigh of relief issued from his breast when he observed Marillac's speechless immobility and the apparent impossibility of his recovering the use of his tongue.

"It's a strange thing," said the notary as he assisted in removing his disabled neighbor from the table, "that that glass of water had more effect than four or five bottles of wine."

"Georges," said Gerfaut to one of the servants, in an agitated voice, "have his bed warmed and help me carry him up to it; Monsieur de Bergenheim, doubtless you have a medicine-chest, if we need any medicine."

Most of the guests had risen at this unlooked-for incident, and part of them gathered around Marillac, who was lying back in his chair, absolutely without movement. Notwithstanding the water with which his temples were bathed and the salts that were held to his nose, and although they removed his cravat and everything that could interfere with the working of his lungs, he did not recover consciousness. His extreme pallor, strangely in contrast with his usual high color, imparted an expression of suffering to his features and rendered him almost unrecognizable.

Instead of adding his efforts to those of his guests, Bergenheim took advantage of the general confusion to lean over

the table and dip his finger in the artist's glass, in which a portion of the water was still standing ; he then put his finger to his lips. This movement was noticed only by the notary, who was naturally of an inquisitive and observant turn of mind. Deeming it a somewhat singular proceeding, he, too, took the glass and swallowed a few drops of the liquid it contained.

"*Sapristi !*" said he in an undertone to Bergenheim, "I'm no longer surprised that the bumper took the breath out of him on the spot. Do you know, Monsieur le baron, if your Monsieur de Gerfaut had taken anything but water during the whole supper, I should think he was the drunker of the two ; or else, if they weren't such great friends, I should imagine he wanted to poison him in order to cut off his wind. Did you notice that he didn't seem anxious to listen to that story ?"

"Ah ! you, too ? then everybody will know it !" cried Christian in a sort of frenzy.

"Take a carafe of kirsch for pure water !" continued the notary, paying no heed to his host's excitement ;—"the devil ! the devil ! it would be well to give him an emetic instantly ; the poor fellow has enough prussic acid in his stomach to poison an ox."

"Who talks of poisoning and prussic acid ?" cried the king's attorney, running from the other end of the table at a decidedly uncertain gait, for the young magistrate's brain had resisted his treacherous libations but little more successfully than the artist's, and he had quite laid aside his imposing, judicial manner ;—"who has been poisoned ? I'm the king's

attorney; it's my place to conduct the investigation. Has there been an autopsy? and where did they find the corpse? in the fields, in the woods, in the river?"

"You lie; there is no body in the river!" shouted Bergenheim in a voice of thunder, and he seized him by the collar like a wild man.

The magistrate, utterly unable to offer the slightest resistance to the powerful hand that was strangling him, was vigorously shaken twice by that hand, as the lamb is shaken by the wolf that carries him off between its jaws. Suddenly the baron stopped, and put his hand to his forehead with the gesture familiar to persons who become conscious that their reason has been disturbed by a paroxysm of uncontrollable passion.

"I am mad," he said, deeply moved. "Monsieur, I am in despair. Really we have taken a little too much wine.—I ask your pardon, monsieur.—Pray, excuse me a moment—I must have air."

Thereupon he hurriedly left the room, brushing against the men who were carrying Marillac to his apartment. The king's attorney, whose ideas, being at the best far from clear, were hopelessly confused as a result of this incredible assault upon his dignity, dropped helplessly into a chair.

"A parcel of poor drinkers!" said the corpulent Monsieur de Camier to the notary, who was left alone with him, for the magistrate, half suffocated with wrath and intoxication, could not be reckoned a guest.—"One finger of wine puts them all under the table, or drives them half-mad."

The notary shook his head several times with a mysterious air.

"All this is by no means clear," he said; "that this Monsieur Marillac hasn't a very strong head, and, when he is tipsy, tells stories that would put you to sleep standing, and that his friend should mistake kirsch for water, I can understand well enough; but it's the baron that astonishes me. Did you see how he shook your neighbor who is just sliding to the floor?"

"It will be floor on floor.<sup>6</sup>—A little warm for winter," said Monsieur de Camier, with a coarse laugh.

"Not a bad pun. But, as to the baron's excusing himself by pretending that he's drunk, I don't believe a word of it, for he has taken hardly anything but water. There were times this evening when he acted very strangely. There's some devilry under all this, Monsieur de Camier, you may be sure there's some devilry under it."

"I'm the king's attorney—don't let the body be moved without me," stammered the magistrate in a feeble, broken voice; and, after vainly struggling to maintain his equilibrium, he justified Monsieur de Camier's pun by leaving his chair for the dining-room floor.

## XXI

Christian de Bergenheim belonged to a race of men which had been gradually dying out since feudal times, and which Napoleon had, in a certain sense, resuscitated; he was exclusively a man of action, making no unnecessary expenditure of imagination or sensitiveness, and on important occasions never allowing his mind to travel out of range of his sword.



The entire absence of that sense which most people call unhealthy irritability, but some few, poesy, had maintained the rough inborn inflexibility of the mainspring of his character. His mind lacked wings to emerge from the positive world; but that lack had its compensations: it was impossible to apply a sturdier arm than his to any form of material resistance. He never lived in the past nor in the future, but always in the present. Insignificant he might be before or after, but at the critical moment he displayed an energy that was the more effective because no unseasonable attacks of emotion or dreaming had weakened its force. The few ideas contained in his brain had, by reason of their small number, become as clear and indurate and impenetrable as the diamond. In the inward light of those fixed stars, he went forward in everything, as one goes forward in the sunlight, with head erect, in a straight line, and ready to trample under foot any obstacle that should essay to arrest his steps or to make him turn aside from his path.

At this moment, however, notwithstanding the sturdy temper of his character, Bergenheim was on the point of bending beneath the blow that had been dealt him. Instead of joining those of his guests who were carrying Marillac to his room, he went down into the garden when he left the dining-room, for the need of air he had alleged as a pretext was a reality as well. He felt oppressed to suffocation by the emotions to which he had been a prey for the last few hours. The dissimulation that prudence made a necessity and his honor a duty, had aggravated his suffering by compelling him to conceal it. A man's grief has this refinement that puts the finishing touch to it and makes it incomparably bitter; it

rests with its whole weight upon his soul because it is forbidden to overflow. From the days of the Roman gladiators, who were trained to die gracefully, etiquette has prescribed silence and secrecy for man's suffering. He must know how to transform the leaden cape that crushes him into a cloak to hide his torture. To uncover one's self for a single instant in order to lament and moan without restraint, to show to others one's bleeding wounds, is called weakness, shamelessness, cowardice! Children may shriek and women weep, but a man must drink his blood like Beaumanoir, that no one may see his wound and laugh at him because he is wounded.

Christian strode for a long time impetuously through the paths and thickets of the park. Bathing his bare and burning brow in the cool evening air, he sought to calm the internal commotion, the tempest of unchecked blood, in the midst of which his reason was tossing and struggling like a vessel on the verge of shipwreck. In certain forms of moral suffering, the same flame that kindles the irritable fibres of the heart with its forked tongue, sends a dense vapor upward to the brain; and the fiercer the flame, the more suffocating the vapor; the more poignant the emotion, the more the brain becomes confused.

Bergenheim fought sturdily against the vertigo that he felt overpowering his faculties; he could not escape the torture altogether, but he tried to extricate his head, at least, from its grip. He exerted all the strength he possessed to recover his self-control, to overpower the dangers and suffering that encompassed him with a firm if not an indifferent gaze,—in a word, to reconquer his habitual command of his emotions,

which had abandoned him several times during supper. His efforts were not vain. His vigorous will, thrown down for a moment by the violence of his sensations, resumed the upper hand at last. Without weakness, without exaggeration, without excitement, he reflected upon his situation as if it were another's. Two facts, one indubitable, the other as yet uncertain, reared their heads before him as horrible as any ghostly vision: on the one hand, murder; on the other, adultery; the grave in the mountain stream as a pendant to the dishonored nuptial bed. No human power could remedy the first of those calamities or stay its consequences; he accepted it, therefore, as a man puts forth his neck to the axe on the scaffold, but he turned his mind away from it, for he needed that to face another horror. Pending the coming of dawn, which would perhaps bring with it expiation, he craved truce of the dead body in order to devote all his thoughts to his wife. He submitted to the principles of honor, haughty and inflexible, the guiding principle of his life, the question of the conduct he should adopt in her regard. Thus far, there were only presumptions against her,—grave presumptions, it is true, when Lambernier's revelations were considered in connection with Marillac's extraordinary indiscretions. To discover the whole truth seemed to him his first duty, to himself as well as to her: if she were innocent, he had her forgiveness to obtain; if she were guilty, he must punish her.

"It is a frightful abyss, and I may find as much filth as blood at the bottom. No matter, I will make the descent."

When he returned to the château, his countenance had recovered its customary serenity. The keenest eyes could hardly

have discovered the slightest change in his features, the hand most experienced in detecting the pulsations of fever would have suspected nothing upon feeling his pulse. The battlefield of the dining-room was deserted at last. Victors and vanquished had withdrawn to their apartments. He went, first of all, to the artist's room, in order that his conduct might appear in nowise peculiar, for, in his capacity of host, a visit to one of his guests who had fallen dead, or something very like it, at his table, was in some sense a duty. The prompt treatment Marillac had received had averted the danger to be feared from his imprudent indulgence and the species of poison with which he had consummated it. Lying at full length in the middle of his bed, in the position in which they had placed him, he was sleeping the heavy, labored sleep which serves to expiate bacchic excesses. Gerfaut was writing at a table some little distance from the bed, apparently intending to sit up all night, and perform the duties of nurse with the devotion of a true friend.

At sight of the baron, Octave rose; his face, upon which so many varying emotions had been depicted during the supper, had recovered its usual expression of reserve to a wonderful degree. The two men met, therefore, with equal self-control.

"Is he asleep?" Christian asked, complying with his guest's gesture requesting him to make no noise.

"He has been for a few moments," was the reply. "He is all right now, and to-morrow he won't show any signs of it. But I trust it will teach you a lesson, and will tend to keep your princely hospitality within proper bounds. Your table is a veritable snare for the unwary."

"Don't throw stones at me, I beg you," retorted the baron, with the same apparent good humor. "If your friend ought to demand satisfaction from any one to-morrow, it should be from you, who take 1765 kirschen for water."

"I really believe I was the drunker of the two," Octave interposed, with a vivacity that concealed some embarrassment; "we scandalized Monsieur de Camier terribly, and he has formed a wretched opinion of Parisian heads and stomachs."

After watching the slumbering artist for a moment, Christian walked to the table at which Gerfaut was seated, and cast his eye over what he was writing.

"Are you working still?" he said, keeping his eyes fixed upon the paper.

"At this moment, I am following the modest profession of copyist. These are some lines that Mademoiselle de Coran-deuil was so gracious as to ask me——"

"Do me a favor. I am going to her room in a moment; give me the lines, and let me hand them to her myself. Since Constance's unlucky experience, she has had a mortal grudge against me, and I should be glad to have an auxiliary like you to start a conversation with her."

Gerfaut wrote the two or three lines he still had to transcribe, and handed the sheet to Bergenheim, who looked at it attentively for some moments, then folded it carefully and put it in his pocket.

"Thank you, monsieur," said he; "I leave you to perform the duty friendship enjoins upon you."

The extremely calm tone in which these words were uttered, and the courteous bow that accompanied them, were so stately

and solemn in their courtesy, that Gerfaut was like one frozen, so to speak, when the baron had left the room ; but the sensation he felt did not go as far as disquietude : he simply did not understand.

In his own apartments, Bergenheim once more opened the paper Octave had handed him and compared it with the letter he had received from Lambernier. The suspicions that a separate examination had aroused were fully confirmed by this comparison ; it was not possible to doubt that the letter and the piece of verse were written by the same hand.

After a few moments' thought, Christian went down to his wife's bedroom.

The soothing serenity of Madame de Bergenheim's apartment presented the same contrast to the uproarious scenes of which the dining-room had lately been the theatre, that one feels upon escaping from the close atmosphere of a dense crowd, packed in a narrow space, to breathe the pure air of a lovely spring evening beneath the flowering lilacs. Instead of the stifling fumes of the debauch, one revelled, once the door was passed, in an atmosphere of indefinable softness ; a nameless perfume, so peculiar to the bedrooms of some young women, that one may believe, without being accused of sentimentality, that it is inherent in themselves. Amid the delicious odors, harmonizing perfectly with the feeble light of an alabaster lamp, the soft tints of the hangings, and a silence that told of meditation, Clémence was sitting in a careless attitude on a couch at one corner of the fire-place. Upon a table at her side a piece of embroidery and a book or two denoted a purpose to work or read, laid aside for one

of those tempting reveries which ardent minds cannot resist. Women, who are made slaves by their position, and are, by nature, greedy for liberty, are especially insatiable dreamers. For reverie opens the prison-doors and sets the soul free; and the narrower the prison, the more inordinate the delight of the soul in its imaginary deliverance. One woman, whom the world deems cold, would terrify the most virile imagination by the audacity of her secret thoughts; another, who has never shown a sign of weakness, surrenders unreservedly, at certain moments of solitude, to the man who can never obtain a word from her when he is present.

Madame de Bergenheim was at that moment undergoing the irresistible impulsion of the imagination that breaks its fetters. She had never before gone so far in the way of abandoning herself to her feelings, never so far in the boldness of her reflections. That day had led her passion a distance that would have terrified her, had she been able to recover for an instant sufficient tranquillity to realize it. But to ask to be calm the heart that loves, is like asking the moon to shine serenely in a stormy sky. Although her lover was no longer with her, she was still under the charm of that passion, ardent and intellectual as well, which answered every craving of her heart, every requirement of her refined taste, and satisfied her restless intellect. At that moment, she was happy to live; there was no melancholy thought that was not banished by the magic words: he loves me! By rare good fortune, all the details of her reconciliation with Octave were pleasant to remember; she would not, if she could, have omitted or added anything thereto; she had reached the point she desired



to attain, and had taken her place upon it as upon a throne. She had seen him again as submissive as in the early days of their love; he had acknowledged her sovereignty, reserving to himself only the right to love and pray. As she recalled the concessions with which she had purchased her triumph, doubtless she was unable to prevent a slight, fleeting blush from tingeing her cheeks; her woman's pride was forced to admit that she had permitted, or accorded, a great deal; but the remembrance of her lover's delicacy soothed her conscience, and rendered the rebuke of her modesty less hard to bear; she forgave herself for having allowed him to guess the strength of her affection; was not the generosity of which he had given such striking proof a pledge that he would never make unfair use of that avowal?

In love, women move swiftly, especially when they are moving of their own accord. When you try to urge them forward too rapidly, their natural instinct leads them to contradiction and resistance; but let them feel an inclination to take the leap themselves, they will cover more ground at a single step than all their lover's efforts could force them across in a month. As soon as Madame de Bergenheim had concluded that Octave was a paragon of disinterestedness, she began to follow her own inclination with a freedom as marked as her restraint had hitherto been. With the logic of passion, adroit in convincing itself of the justice of its desire, she exaggerated Octave's noble conduct to heroic proportions, in order to derive therefrom for herself the right to regard him with more trustful and more expansive affection. As he had such perfect command over himself, could not she afford to be less

rigid? Provided that her virtue remained without a stain, what mattered it whether she owed her salvation to her own strength or to her lover's respect for her?

After the manner of most women, who, when they do not break their chain, seek to lengthen it as much as possible, in order to play with their slavery, Clémence came at last to see criminality in but one single fact. Up to that point, innocence seemed possible to her, and virtue secure; insensibly she came to look upon, as trifling, venial faults, the trespasses, so sweet in the committing, which our ancestors, in their expressive style, called the *menus suffrages*<sup>1</sup> of love. With the reserve of a chaste imagination and the self-assurance of a heart that deems itself infallible, she erected a barrier in front of the goal to which all passions tend, as a railing is placed on the brink of a precipice; she covered the barrier with a veil so that she could not even see the danger, and, casting her eyes over the ground she allowed herself to enjoy, she thought: This is mine. In her mistaken innocence, she deemed reconcilable two things that our moral code looks upon as almost invariably irreconcilable: passion and duty; and, in order to unite them, she smoothed away the too unpromising asperities of both; she made passion self-restrained, and duty tolerant. Her reflections growing momentarily bolder, she gradually despoiled her marriage of all the prestige of sentiment, until she finally saw in it naught but what it really was—a bargain. As a logical consequence, she applied to it the rule of equity that serves as a foundation to all other bargains. It seemed to her that the entire sacrifice of all the luxuriance of her own nature to her husband's commonplace and unintelligent

mind was something that no human power could demand. Reducing to its most restricted meaning the word "fidelity," which had been read to her in the name of the law, the ring that was its symbol seemed to her far too narrow to enchain forever her heart, her mind, all those imperious faculties which can exist only through love; and since that love, so essential to the life of her soul, was not included among her wedding-gifts, she believed that she might welcome it wherever she fell in with it. And so, instead of persisting in her resistance in a hopeless struggle, she accepted her passion as being thenceforth inseparable from her existence; she divided herself into two parts,—one the slave of duty, the victim of her marriage-vows, condemned to humiliating, passive alienation of her person; but the other free as air, her own, her real self, her veritable life; and who could deny her right to accord the latter to the heart that would pay her price therefor?

The noise made by the opening of the door of her bedroom broke in upon this perilous meditation, whose every undulation beat more boldly than the last upon the attractive shores of the forbidden country. Madame de Bergenheim turned her head with a gesture of annoyance; but when, instead of her maid, whom she was making ready to reprimand, she recognized her husband, the vexation expressed upon her features suddenly gave place to a look of terror. In obedience to an impulse she could not repress, she rose from her seat as if he were a stranger, and stood against the mantel-piece, in an attitude which would have betrayed her embarrassment and constraint to the least observant spectator.

Nothing in Christian's manner justified the apprehension that the sight of him seemed to cause his wife. He walked into the room with a tranquil air, his lips wearing the smile he had forced them to assume, although it cost him an inward shudder; a sort of hypocritical flower with expanding petals and hideous root. The smiling, almost caressing expression of his face, instead of reassuring Clémence, suddenly changed the nature of her dread. Rudely awakened in the midst of a guilty dream, her first glance saw in him an outraged husband ready to wreak vengeance upon her, a second calmer glance revealed something no less horrifying,—an amorous husband, disposed to claim the privileges that were his by right. At that moment, when her heart was still beating fast with the remembrance of Octave's embrace, she would have preferred to find a dagger in Christian's hand than a kiss upon his lips; at that moment, fidelity to the lover and desertion of the husband seemed her duty. She was dismayed by the horror he suddenly inspired in her, but the necessity of escaping the torture with which she fancied that she was threatened put every other feeling to silence. With the presence of mind which all women exhibit at such crises, she fell back upon her couch, and said in a languid, reproachful tone, as if she were not feeling well:

"I am very glad to see you a moment to scold you; I missed your customary attentions this evening. Did you think that the noise in the dining-room would not reach me here?"

"Were you disturbed by it?" said Christian, watching her closely.

"Unless one has a head of iron—it seems that your friends abused the liberty permitted in the country. From what Justine tells me, some things have happened that would have been more in place at the Headless Woman."

"Are you suffering much?"

"A frightful sick-headache. I would like to be able to sleep a little."

"I am very remiss in not thinking of it. But you will forgive me, won't you?"

Bergenheim leaned over the back of the couch and threw his arms around the young woman's shoulders, putting his lips to her brow as she hung her head. For the first time in his life, he was playing a part with his wife, and he watched with implacable attention the slightest changes of expression on her face, the most trifling revelations of her manner. He noticed that she shuddered against the arm he had thrown about her, and the forehead that his lips hardly breathed upon was swiftly withdrawn and as cold as marble.

He stood erect once more, and walked back and forth several times, taking pains not to look at her, for the aversion denoted by these symptoms seemed to him a convincing proof, and he feared he should not be able to contain himself.

"What is the matter?" the young woman asked, noticing her husband's agitation.

These words awoke the baron anew to the necessity of acting with prudence. He walked to her side once more, and replied in an indifferent tone :

"I am somewhat annoyed over a very trivial matter ; your aunt is at the bottom of it."

“I know. She is furiously angry with you since the double catastrophe—to Constance and her coachman. As to Constance, confess that you are not guiltless.”

“She is not content to be angry; she threatens me with a complete rupture. Here, read this.”

As he spoke, he handed her a letter folded very large, and sealed with the Corandeuil arms. The escutcheon, accompanied by supporters, crest, and mantle, and surrounded by the ancient and romantic device: *Corandeuil, Cœur en deuil!* (heart in mourning), resembled, so far as its dimensions were concerned, the seal attached to a diploma rather than the seal of an ordinary letter; it conveyed at once a very grave idea of the contents of the enclosure, and that impression was confirmed at the first glance within, by the straight, stiff, angular handwriting as well as by the unexcelled dowager-like orthography, which pitilessly proscribed the Voltairean *a*, and employed *z* freely instead of *s*.

Madame de Bergenheim read the letter aloud:

“After the incredible, indescribable occurrences of this day, the course which I feel it my duty to pursue will doubtless not surprise you in the least, monsieur; you will understand that I cannot and will not remain longer in a house where the lives of my servants and of other creatures that are known to be dear to me are exposed to assaults of the most deplorable nature. Although I should have been glad to close my eyes to the fact, I long since discovered that plots are daily set on foot against every one who wears the Corandeuil livery. I supposed that it would not be necessary for me to put an end to

this state of things, that you would undertake that duty ; but it seems that consideration and respect for ladies are no part of a gentleman's duty in these days. I must therefore make up my mind to an entire absence of gentlemanly treatment, and must myself look to the well-being of the persons and other creatures who are attached to me. I start for Paris to-morrow. Constance's condition will, I trust, enable her to bear the fatigues of the journey, but Baptiste's wound is so serious that I do not wish to expose him to it. I have decided, therefore, although I regret the necessity, to leave him here until he is able to travel, commending him to my niece's humanity.

"Accept, monsieur, with my parting compliments, my warmest thanks for your *courteous hospitality*.

"YOLANDE DE CORANDEUIL."

"Your aunt rather abuses the privilege of making a fool of herself," said the baron, when his wife had finished reading the letter ; "she breaks camp, requesting me to look after her wounded, as if there had just been a battle."

"But I saw her within two hours, and although she was very angry, she never said a word about her intended departure."

"It was only a moment ago that Jean handed me the letter, in full livery and with the important air of an ambassador demanding his passports. You must go and talk to her, my dear, and exert all your influence to induce her to change her plans."

"I will go at once," said Clémence, rising as she spoke.



"Your dear aunt, you know, is slightly obstinate when she has clothed herself in a caprice. If she should persist in this one, use this argument, the force of which she will understand, to induce her to remain. Tell her that I am obliged to go to Epinal to-morrow with Monsieur de Camier to look after the sale of some wood, and shall be away at least three days. You understand that it will be difficult for your aunt to leave you alone while I am away, because of these guests of ours."

"Certainly, she couldn't do that," said she eagerly.

"So far as I am personally concerned, I see no harm in it," said the baron, trying to smile; "but we must look after the proprieties, above all things. You are too young and too pretty a hostess to be left without a chaperon, and Aline, instead of being capable of serving you in that capacity, would be an additional burden. So your aunt simply must stay here until I return."

"And between now and then Constance and Baptiste will be cured and her wrath forgotten. You have not mentioned this trip to Epinal and sale of wood before."

"Go to your aunt before she goes to bed," said Bergenheim, paying no heed to that remark. "I will wait for you here," he added, taking a seat on the couch. "We start early to-morrow, and I must know to-night what to expect."

As soon as Madame de Bergenheim had gone out and had closed the first door of the small reception-room, Christian rose, ran rather than walked to the space between the windows, and looked in the wainscoting for the secret button mentioned by Lambernier. He soon found it; at the first pressure, the spring did its duty and the panel opened. The violet-wood

casket was on the shelf; he took it down and scrutinized closely for some time the letters it contained. Most of them resembled in shape the one already in his possession; some were in envelopes addressed to Madame de Bergenheim, and bore a little seal with a crest which he recognized as Gerfaut's. Moreover, the identity of the handwriting was beyond question, and his doubts, if he still retained any doubts, must have vanished in face of the evidence. Having glanced rapidly over a few of the letters taken at random, he put them back in the casket and replaced it on the shelf, taking care to leave everything just as he had found it. He closed the panel with equal care, and resumed his seat by the hearth.

When Clémence returned, her husband seemed engrossed in one of the volumes he had found on the table, while his hand was mechanically toying with a little bronze cup in which his wife ordinarily placed her rings and ear-rings when she undressed.

"I have won our suit," said the baroness gaily: "my aunt admitted the force of my arguments, and she will defer her departure until your return."

Christian made no reply.

"That means that she won't go at all, for in three days her towering wrath will have time to cool down; she's a good soul at heart.—Why, how long have you known English?" she continued, noticing how closely her husband kept his eyes fixed on the volume of Lord Byron that he was using to keep himself in countenance.

Bergenheim threw the book on the table, raised his head, and tried to look his wife calmly in the face. Despite his

efforts, his features wore an expression by which she would probably have been terrified had she noticed it; but her eyes were fixed on the cup which he still held and which he was twisting in his hand as if he were moulding clay.

"*Mon Dieu!* Christian, what is the matter, for heaven's sake; what has that poor cup done to you?" she asked in amazement, wherein there was a slight touch of the alarm that is always so quick to awake in a heart that does not feel free from blame.

He rose, and replaced the misshapen bronze on the mantel-piece.

"I don't know what the matter is with me to-night," he said with an effort; "my nerves are all on edge. I will leave you, for I need rest myself. I shall go away to-morrow, long before you are astir, and shall return Wednesday."

"No later than that, at all events, my dear," said she, with a sweetness of tone and language which few women are loyal enough to abstain from under such circumstances.

He left the room without replying, for he was afraid he should lose control of himself; that species of hypocritical caress aroused in him a longing to make an end of it and kill her on the spot.

## XXII

Twenty-four hours had passed. The baron had left the château in the morning, as had all his guests except Gerfaut and the artist. The day had dragged its slow course along,

dull and wearisome beyond measure. A general coolness tended to keep apart the small number of persons who remained at the château. Aline had held aloof from her sister-in-law ever since their conversation in the boudoir; Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, entirely absorbed by the care that the state of her pug demanded, made but one very brief appearance at table; Marillac, who spent the day, from the time he left his bed, drinking tea like a mandarin, did not dare exhibit his face, drawn and pale as it was from the excesses of the previous night. He pretended to be sick, a little more so than he really was, in order to postpone as long as possible the moment when he would be compelled to appear before the mistress of the house, whose punctilious, aristocratic severity he greatly dreaded. Madame de Bergenheim did not leave her aunt, and thus avoided being left alone with Octave, who might have managed to obtain an almost continual *tête-à-tête* with her, in view of these different circumstances, had she been willing. Christian's absence, instead of being a signal of deliverance to the lovers, seemed to have caused a fresh misunderstanding between them, for Clémence would have deemed it immodest, in some sense, to misuse the greater freedom accorded her by her husband's departure. She was the more reserved, therefore, throughout the day, because she saw that greater facilities were afforded her for being weak; but at night, when she was alone in her apartments, her factitious sternness suddenly gave way. In proportion as she had shown herself inflexible and unapproachable to him whose presence she feared, her thoughts of her lover were loving and passionate when she believed that she was out of reach of his

fascinations. Resorting anew to the compromise with her conscience which allowed her thoughts to travel in an oblique line, provided that her actions kept faithfully to the straight road, she took her reward for the rigid uprightness of her conduct by indulging in appetizing transgressions of the imagination, perfidious sylphs that bring a blush to the most innocent cheek with the soft breath of their wings. Reclining rather than sitting on the couch in her antechamber, she passed the whole evening dreaming of Octave, speaking to him as if he could reply to her, making a thousand confessions, more affectionate than any he had previously obtained from her, entertaining, in short, in the richest sanctuary of her heart, the man whom she exiled from her presence.

Then her excitement gradually subsided. Since the morning, the atmosphere had been so heavily charged with electricity as to inflict downright suffering upon nervous organizations. The long-threatened storm burst fiercely at last ; the thunder rumbled in the distance, repeated by the numberless echoes in the mountains ; the rain beat ceaselessly against the windows ; at every moment, a gust of wind, passing over the château, extorted a plaintive wailing from the weather-cocks on the roof, from blinds insecurely fastened, from everything that gave its waves of air an opening. Sometimes a more persistent gust made its way into the corridors, and rushed through them with a sound like the notes of a dirge in the pipes of a gigantic organ. The most tranquil mind could not have listened unmoved to those strange voices lamenting in the silence of the night. Madame de Bergenheim's unhealthy sensitiveness, aggravated of late by a constant moral

struggle, amounted at last to actual physical suffering; her thoughts insensibly took a melancholy course in harmony with the moaning of the storm, and the golden dreams of her imagination vanished, to be replaced at once by intense depression of spirits.

In these fits of dejection, which had become much more frequent within a short time, a dispassionate review of her own position disclosed abysses in her path which at other times she chose not to see or deemed passable. So long as she had looked upon Octave as an adversary, and had struggled in good faith against his influence, she had had him constantly confronting her, and he had given her sufficient occupation to keep her from any extended introspection; but, since she had gone over to him, as one goes over to the enemy, and, in her heart, had taken sides with her lover against her husband, she found herself confronted by the latter. Her courage failed her at the mere thought; she was so conscious of her own weakness and guilt that she was vanquished before the battle. When she was still playing with her passion, she had thought little of Christian; it seemed puerile to her to mingle the tutelary idea of her husband in an amusement that was to her mind free from danger; and when, seeking to break her plaything, she had found that it was made of iron, and that it had been metamorphosed in her hand into a more and more tyrannical yoke, she called the conjugal divinities to her assistance, but in too indistinct a voice to be heard by them. Now the situation had changed again. Christian was no longer the insignificant ally whom the virtuous wife, with the fatuity of virtue, had doomed to

ignorant neutrality, nor the protector in whose arms the weak and faltering wife had sought refuge when an attack of vertigo had made the ground slippery to her feet, tempted as they were to fall: he was the husband, in the hostile, redoubtable acceptance of the word; the husband, the brutal, jealous despot, the nightmare of every hour of the day, the tax-collector's minion lying upon the bed that abhors him, the reptile whose scorching breath the rose must undergo, the being, in short, in whom, on the day that love ceases to recognize his rights, are incarnate the scourge of terror, the repugnance of disgust, the deformity of ridicule.

That man had on his side the law that always aids the stronger, religion,—which, however, took compassion one day on the adulterous woman,—and society, where people vie with one another in their eagerness to throw that first stone which the Master cursed. She was his serf, bound to his glebe by indissoluble bonds. He had branded her with his name as a chattel; he held in his hand all the threads of her existence; he was the dispenser of her fortune, the judge of her acts, the master of the domestic fireside. She had no dignity except that derived from him. Let him withdraw his arm from her for a single day and she would fall from her honorable position, nor could any human power lift her up again. Society closed its salons to the banished wife, and added to the husband's sentence a yet more crushing anathema; for there is no clear sky, no refreshing breeze, no protecting hand for the poor flowers that have gone astray. She who is most humble in her sin, always finds a thousand feet eager to trample upon her, a thousand vile reptiles happy to inject their venom into her.



Once she had fallen from the sphere of illusion to that of reality, Madame de Bergenheim wounded herself at every step. She was seized with bitter discouragement as she thought that a deplorable fatality made happiness an absolute impossibility. Her marriage and her love were disputing for her existence, both powerless to gain absolute control of it, and able only to deal out death to each other. Marriage made love a crime; love made marriage an instrument of torture. She felt that she was dragged along by her chain, without the virtue to carry it, without the courage to break it; she could see no end that was at once honorable and attractive to her painful path. She simply had the choice between two hells: love and shame, or virtue and despair. An ominous, threatening cloud hid her future; she fell back in a state of feverish bewilderment, like the eddying vortex in which Dante met Francesca's sorrowing spirit. Like that other angel, her sister in love and suffering, she wandered hither and thither at the will of the tormentor, finding no relief from her agony, no rest from her weariness. If such a flight in the thick of the tempest possesses a ghastly fascination, there are moments when the most impetuous passion feels the need of peace and security. Every heart aspires to happiness; now happiness is not the delirium of the moment, however ecstatic it may be; it is the assurance of a to-morrow, the sight of the goal toward which one is progressing, the anticipated delights of the future mingled with those of the present; and this sanctuary in which affection may sleep without fear, this faith in destiny, this kingdom of the days that are to come, all these are the possession of lawful love alone. To win the right to

live, from hour to hour, at a price that would daunt the starving man if he must pay it for a meal; to think, as one gathers the most insignificant flower: Will it be the last? lavishly to expend the emotions of one's heart, with a presentiment of woe to come, and to retain but little power to endure suffering; such is guilty love! In vain does the most radiant sunlight gild for it the present hour; it has no to-morrow: to-morrow often means to it desertion, shame, despair.

Amid such excited, melancholy reflections the hours flew swiftly by; it was near midnight. Madame de Bergenheim thought that it was time to seek the slumber that persisted in avoiding her. Instead of ringing for her maid, whose presence would interfere with that craving for solitude which love inspires, she went herself to the library to find some book which she judged likely to assist her to fall to sleep. As she opened the door of the closet adjoining the antechamber, she saw, by the light of the candle she carried, a glittering object like a precious stone lying on the floor; she supposed at first that it was one of her rings, but, as she stooped to pick it up, she discovered her mistake: it was a scarf-pin, consisting of a ruby mounted on a small plate of gold enamel. At the first glance, she recognized it as belonging to Monsieur de Gerfaut. She had often noticed it in his cravat, as a woman always notices every detail of her lover's dress.

Robinson Crusoe, when he discovered the savage's foot-print on the sandy shore of his island, experienced no keener emotion than Clémence at that unexpected find. She picked up the pin, and returned to the antechamber with a precipitation that resembled flight. In an instant her imagination

exhausted itself in contradictory conjectures to explain the presence of such an object in such a place. Octave must have been there to have left that token of his presence; therefore he had it in his power to make his way to the very heart of her apartments without her knowledge; what he had done once, he could of course do again! And so she was at his mercy, in a measure, if he chose to return! and would not the dead of night, Christian's absence, and the fact that everybody in the château was asleep, encourage him to attempt such an audacious step—that very night, perhaps? The dismay caused by that thought dissipated the intoxication of her ideas like an ice-cold bath; for, like most women, she was a little braver in dreams than in action; and although her mind sometimes yielded to the charm of giving color to her passion with romantic and perilous incidents, when the crisis came it found her unnerved and trembling. A moment before, she was evoking Octave's image and seating it fondly by her side on the couch. The realization of her fancy terrified her the moment she deemed it possible, and she thought of nothing save preventing it. She was sure that her lover had not found his way into the closet through the antechamber, for she had never permitted him to enter the latter room, and he had never been admitted beyond the little salon in that direction. The idea of the door leading into the corridor came to her mind like a flash of lightning; she remembered that that door was not usually locked, because the door of the library always was; she knew that Octave had a key to the library, and she readily understood that he could reach her quarters in no other way. Summoning all her

courage as a result of her terror, she returned to the closet, descended the stairs with an uncertain step, and threw the bolt of the door with a nervous movement indicating a sort of desperate resolution. This defensive step accomplished, she returned to the antechamber and dropped upon the couch as if the expedition had exhausted her strength.

Gradually her excitement grew less intense; Clémence breathed more freely, and eventually reached a state of mind analogous to that expressed by the Italian proverb: *Passato il periglio, gabbato il santo!* Her fright seemed childish as soon as she believed herself to be out of danger; she promised herself that she would read Octave such a lecture the next day as would cure him of any desire he might have to repeat such a performance; then she renounced the petty pleasure of scolding him, as she thought that, in order to enjoy it, she must avow the discovery of the pin, and, as a consequence, give it back to him; but she was as determined to keep it as ever a thief was determined to steal the property of another. A long time before, she had conceived a girlish passion for the pin; it seemed to her the prettiest bauble in the whole world. Moreover, it was the one Octave usually wore, and did not that fact alone give it a value beyond words? However great her desire, she would never have dared to ask him for it, but, as chance had put it in her hands, the temptation to appropriate it became irresistible. She felt a thrill of mad delight, unaccompanied by remorse, at the thought of that evil deed. Passing a black satin cravat around her smooth, white neck, she fastened the precious ruby therein, having first kissed it more devoutly than if it

were a blessed relic, and ran and stood in front of the mirror in her bedroom to judge of the effect of her theft.

"How lovely it is, and how I love it!" she said; "but however can I manage to wear it without his seeing it?"

Before she had solved that difficult question, she heard a slight noise, and stood as if turned to stone in front of the mirror in which she was gazing at herself.

"It is he!" she thought; after standing a moment in a sort of dazed condition, she crept as far as the staircase leading to the closet and listened, leaning against the rail, for she felt that her knees were giving way beneath her. At first, she could hear only the hurried beating of her heart; then there was the same sound as before, but more distinct. Somebody was turning the handle of the door at the foot of the stairs, trying to open it; the unforeseen obstacle of the bolt evidently irritated beyond measure the person who was trying to pass through, for his efforts finally became so violent that they threatened to break the bolt or break down the door.

Madame de Bergenheim's first thought was to take refuge in her bedroom and lock herself in; but she at once realized the danger to be anticipated from Octave's evident exasperation, and the evil that might result if the slightest sound should be heard outside. There was not a moment to waste in hesitation. With one of those sudden resolutions that necessity forces upon the most timid natures, the young woman ran swiftly down-stairs and drew the bolt.

The door was opened softly, and closed with the same precaution. The alabaster lamp in the antechamber cast a feeble light upon the upper part of the staircase, but the lower part

was in almost absolute darkness. By the heart, rather than the eyes, she recognized Octave; he could see Madame de Bergenheim very indistinctly, her white dress being vaguely outlined in the darkness; she stood in front of him, leaning against the stair-rail, trembling with emotion, and silent, for she had not yet found the word she sought with which to send him away. For his part, he was deeply embarrassed, as the most enterprising of men are when an unexpected accident overturns their calculations. He had expected to take Clémence by surprise, and he found her on her guard; the thought of the somewhat unmanly part he was playing at that moment, sent a blush to his cheeks, that was hidden by the darkness, and deprived him for some moments of his ordinary self-assurance. Searching his mind in vain for a phrase which should in the first place justify him triumphantly and win for him as a right that which he was now attempting to obtain by a crime, he had recourse to a method often employed in the absence of eloquence; he kneeled on the floor and seized the young woman's hand; it seemed as if the violence of his emotion made it impossible for him to express himself otherwise than by silent adoration.

When she felt his hand upon hers, Clémence recoiled, and said in a hollow voice:

“You fill me with horror!”

“Horror!” he repeated, springing to his feet.

“Yes; and that is not strong enough,” she continued in a tone so emphatic that it seemed dictated by anger,—“I should have said contempt instead of horror. You deceived me when you said that you loved me, deceived me shamefully!”

"Why, I adore you," he cried vehemently; "what proof will you have of my love?"

"Go, go instantly. A proof, you say; I will accept one, and one only: go, I wish you to go—do you hear?"

Instead of obeying, he seized her in his arms despite the resistance she offered.

"Anything but that," he said:—"bid me kill myself at your feet and I will do it, but I will not go."

She tried for some minutes to extricate herself; but although she exerted all her strength, she could not succeed.

"Oh! you have no pity," she said, more feebly; "but I abhor you; kill me, rather!"

Gerfaut was deeply moved, almost terrified, by the tone of anguish in which she pronounced those words; he released her, but when he opened his arms he felt that she staggered, and he was obliged to support her.

"Why do you hurt me so?" she murmured in a faltering voice, as she fell in a swoon on her lover's breast.

He took her in his arms, ascended the narrow staircase, not without difficulty, and laid her upon the couch in the antechamber. She had entirely lost consciousness; the deathly pallor of her cheeks would have made him believe she was dead, except for a slight trembling that ran through her limbs from time to time and seemed to forebode an attack of hysteria. Octave supplied such aid as her condition demanded like a man with sufficient experience of female swooning not to lose his head. The most skilful lady's-maid could not have unfastened more deftly the clasps of her *peignoir*, and the satin cravat which interfered with her breathing. Despite



his anxiety, he could not repress a smile as he recognized his pin, which he hardly expected to find at Clemence's throat after the hostile reception he had met with. Kneeling beside her, he bathed her hands and temples with cold water, and held to her nose a bottle of smelling-salts he found on the toilet-table in her bedroom. Little by little these remedies produced their due effect; the nervous convulsions passed away, her breath came more regularly through her unclenched teeth, and a slight flush modified her pallor. She languidly opened her eyes, and closed them again as if the light hurt them; then she put out her arm and put it around Octave's neck as he leaned over her; she lay some time thus, breathing softly, and apparently enjoying a most peaceful sleep.

"You will give me your pin, won't you?" said she suddenly, turning instinctively toward her lover; and she clasped her hands in such a way as to make a necklace of her arms.

"Is not everything I have yours?" he replied very softly, praying with the utmost fervor that the dream which seemed to have possession of her mind might be prolonged.

"Mine?" she repeated in a feeble but passionate voice; "tell me again that you belong to me, Octave; that you are my own treasure; mine alone, my Octave!"

"You don't drive me away, then? you want me with you?" he asked, making the most of this semblance of good fortune, and brushing the young woman's soft cheek with his lips.

"Oh! stay, I beseech you! close beside me and forever!"

She held him tighter in her arms as if she were afraid he would leave her, and she turned so that her mouth took the place of her cheek. The ardor with which he responded to

this instinctive impulse of affection was too energetic for Clémence's slumber to resist it. She sat up, opened her eyes, and looked about her for a moment in silent amazement.

"What has happened?" she said at last, "and how came you here?—Oh! it is horrible; you punish me cruelly for my weakness."

This sudden outburst of severity, following so quickly upon such clinging tenderness, changed Octave's ecstasy to irritation.

"You are the one," he retorted, "who practise refinement in cruelty. Why do you give me a glimpse of happiness, if you propose to snatch it from me the next moment? If you love me only in your dreams, for God's sake go to sleep again and never wake. I will stay by your side, seeking the joy of my life in the confessions of your sleep. Your words a moment since were so sweet! now do you deny them?"

"What did I say?" she asked, with some hesitation, and with an anxious blush.

These symptoms, which he took to be of ill augury, increased his ill-humor. He rose, and replied in a bitter tone:

"Have no fear. I won't make an unfair use of the words that escaped you, however delightful and flattering they were to me; they told me that you loved me. I do not believe it now; you are moved, I see, but it is with fear, not with love."

Clémence moved farther back on the couch, folded her arms across her breast, and looked at him for some time in silence.

"Do you deem those two sentiments so incompatible?" said she at last; "you are the only one I am afraid of. Other men would not complain."

There was such irresistible fascination in her accent and her expression, that Gerfaut's ill-humor melted away like ice beneath the sun's rays. He kneeled again beside the couch, took Clémence's hands, and tried to clasp them around his neck as they were a moment before; but, instead of falling in with the arrangement, she tried to make him rise.

"I am so comfortable at your feet!" he said, resisting slightly in order to maintain his position. "Anybody can sit by your side; I alone have the right to kneel here. Do not deprive me of that right."

Madame de Bergenheim released one of her hands and raised it, extending her finger with a threatening air.

"Think a little less of your rights," said she, "and a little more of your duty. I urge you to do my bidding and to take advantage of my indulgence in allowing you to sit beside me a moment. Remember that I might be more severe, and that, if I should treat you as you deserve,——"

He did not give her time to finish. The haste with which he sprang to his feet caused a half-smile to play about the young woman's lips; but that expression was not of long duration; it changed to one of ineffable sadness, while Octave, in the triumph of taking possession, glanced ecstatically about, and his eyes, after scrutinizing all the details of the boudoir, strayed through the half-open door of the bedroom. When he looked at Clémence again, he was appalled by the bitterness expressed in the great brown eyes that were fixed upon him.

"You must have the utmost contempt for me," said she, in a grave tone, "to have allowed yourself to take such a step! Perhaps you think badly of me because of this weakness which

I cannot hide from you.—Oh! it would be worse than death if you should despise me because I love you!”

When a woman, forcing back her tears, addresses you in reproachful words which she seems to have dipped in her heart's blood, there is no possible reply. Prayers and oaths are like glass. At such times, you must show that you are ready to die to prove that you are worthy of being loved. Gerfaut, when he heard Clémence's words, felt all the dreamy joy with which his bosom was overflowing ebb away, and he replied in a dejected tone:

“How can I have deserved such cruel words?”

This melancholy air touched the baroness more deeply than the most impassioned protestations would have done.

“Forgive me,” she said, “I have hurt you; forgive me, my Octave. You yourself said something very cruel to me just now. I do not love you! if that were so, what sort of a woman should I be? Is not the reality, the excess, I may say, of my affection my only possible excuse for my conduct? A weak excuse, I know, and one that does not justify me! but it does seem as if I were less guilty to yield to an overpowering sentiment.”

“You do love me, then?”

“*Mon Dieu!* you know that it's not my fault, do you not? I struggled hard! Do not judge me too severely, Octave; I need your esteem, for I have been accustomed to my own. What shall I have left if you judge me as I judge myself?—Ah! it is a very bitter feeling: every proof of attachment that you receive from me gives you an additional excuse for not respecting me.”

“Why do you inflict such torture upon me?” cried Gerfaut in a sort of frenzy. “What right have you to deem me ungrateful or mad? I, respect you less because you love me more! cease to worship my divinity, when she listens to my prayer!—No, Clémence, I cannot divide my heart in two, and separate the ardor of my desire from the veneration I must lay at your feet; do not reduce to such wretched proportions the sentiment you have inspired in me. When I call you angel and queen, the words come from my heart, not from my memory. If they were not profaned by the lips of the common herd of mortals, I should have applied them to you, for they alone afford a feeble idea of what you are in my eyes. Be sure that my love is as respectful as it is passionate. I can understand your incredulity, for I can find no words to express what I feel. But do not punish me for the impotence of my language, do not punish me because my adoration for you is so great that I know no prayer worthy of it. Refuse no longer, therefore, to stoop to my level, to let your heart expand in the enchanted life to which I long to introduce you. Do you fear to endanger your supremacy by consenting to make me happy? That is one of the falsehoods that are current among the vulgar and arouse the wrath of those who know how to love. Have no fear that I will break your chain because you have gilded it and woven flowers about it. Kings kneel at their coronation, and rise when they are crowned; but I, if your hand deigns to crown me, will remain on my knees;—on my knees now and forever!”

This time, Clémence did not make him rise, for it pleased her to see him at her feet.

"Then if I tell you to go, you will obey me?" she asked, after a short silence.

He hesitated a moment, and looked at her with a suppliant air.

"I will obey," said he; "but will you have the courage to command?"

For a long time, they gazed into each other's eyes. The anxiety depicted in Octave's seemed to impart additional force to their ordinary eloquence, while the determined expression that animated Clémence's for an instant, changed gradually into a languishing, helpless appeal.

"I will allow you to stay until half-past twelve," she said at last, glancing at the clock in her bedroom, which she could see through the half-open door. Gerfaut followed the direction of her glance, and saw that she gave him hardly more than a quarter of an hour; but he was too adroit to comment upon the fact. He knew, also, that the second quarter of an hour is always a little less difficult to obtain than the first. Clémence, for her part, had no sooner made this concession than she repented it; but, instead of manifesting her disquietude, she thought it best to conceal it beneath an affectation of indifference.

"I am sure," said she, "that you must have thought me very capricious again to-day; you must forgive me, it's a family failing. You know the saying: *Caprice de Corandeuil!*"

"I propose that the *Amour de Gerfaut* shall become proverbial," he replied tenderly.

"You do well to be kind and to say pleasant things to me, for I need them to-night. I feel sad and ill; my mind is

filled with the most dismal thoughts. I think the storm makes me feel so. Don't you have the same feeling? How lugubrious that thunder is! it seems to me like a threat of disaster."

Octave smiled at her as we smile at the foolish fears of a dearly loved child.

"Your imagination is still the same," he said, "greedy of mournful emotions; if you should put as much energy into being happy as you do in imagining trouble, our life would be too delightful. What does the storm matter?—and even if you should see in it a symbol, what is there so terrible about that? The cloud is a vapor, the thunder a sound, and both are equally ephemeral; the azure sky alone, which they darken for an instant, is eternal. The sky is love. Do you not believe with me in its sovereign immortality?"

"Did you hear nothing?" said Madame de Bergenheim, suddenly starting up and listening with an anxious expression.

"Nothing. What is it?"

"I am afraid that Justine may have taken it into her head to come down; she is so unendurable with her attentions——"

She rose, and looked into the bedroom, and as a precautionary measure turned the key in the door. A moment later, she resumed her seat on the couch.

"Justine is asleep long ago," said Octave; "I did not venture to come until I saw the light go out in her room."

Clémence took his hand and held it to her breast.

"Will you believe me now," said she, "when I tell you that I am afraid?"



"Poor, dear angel!" he cried, as he felt her heart beating with great violence.

"I owe these palpitations, which come upon me now with the slightest excitement, to you. I know that we are in no danger, that no one will enter my apartments at this time of night, and yet I feel a dread that I cannot overcome. There are women, they say, who become accustomed to this form of torment, and finally reach a point where they can be guilty and tranquil at the same time, and—this is a shameful thought I am going to confess to you—sometimes I suffer so that I wish I were like them. But it is impossible; I cannot accuse myself to wrong-doing. I was born to be virtuous."

Octave had too much delicacy to attempt one of those sophisms which men always have on hand on such occasions, and from which remorseful women ordinarily accept absolution without much discussion. He knew that Madame de Bergenheim's sufferings were absolutely genuine, and that she would bestow a cold welcome upon an apology for her own conduct which her conscience refused to accept. So he made no reply to this sorrowful outburst, save by protestations of devotion and the sweetest words his heart could find.

"You cannot understand that," she continued, allowing him to take her hands, which he pressed affectionately; "you are a man; you love boldly; you yield to every sentiment that attracts you, with no fear of finding its charm broken at the end by remorse. And then, even if you suffer, your suffering is your own at all events, and no one has the right to ask you what the matter is. But my tears are not my own; my tears! and I have shed many of them for you—I must

drink them, for *he* would have the right to say to me: 'Why are you weeping?'—And what could I reply?"

She turned her head away to hide the tears her eyelids could no longer hold back; he saw them, and, leaning over her, wiped them away with his lips.

"Your tears are mine!" he said passionately; "but do not drive me to despair by saying that my love makes you unhappy."

"Unhappy! ah, yes! most unhappy! and yet I would not exchange that unhappiness for the most perfect *félicité* that others enjoy. That unhappiness is my treasure, my life. To be loved by you!—To think that there was a time when that joy would have been legitimate!—What fatality is upon us, Octave? Why did we meet so late? I have a dream, a lovely dream, oh! so often! I dream that I am still free, and you—— Ah! there is a never-ending regret in my heart."

"You are still free, if you love me.—It's the rain beating against the blind," he added, noticing the evident anxiety with which Madame de Bergenheim was listening as if some inexplicable noise had aroused her fears anew.

They listened a moment, but could hear nothing save the monotonous whistling of the storm.

"To be loved by you and not to blush!" she continued, gazing fondly at him, when her alarm had subsided once more; "to avow your affection as the glory of my life! to be with you without the constant fear that a stroke of lightning will part us! to give you my heart and still be worthy to pray! that would be such heavenly happiness as one knows only in dreams——"

“Oh ! dream when I am not with you ; but when you see me at your feet, when our hearts are beating side by side, each for the other, do not invoke the image of something that is not in our power to turn our thoughts from our present happiness. Think you that there are any imaginable bonds that could unite us more closely ? Am I not yours ? And have not you yourself, who talk of giving me your heart as of a longing that can never be gratified,—have you not already given it to me absolutely ?”

“Yes, absolutely !” she replied, no longer resisting the force that urged her on ; “and justly, too, for I owe it to you. I knew nothing of life until the day I received it from your eyes ; but since that day I have lived, and I can die. You created me !—and I love you.—I, too, lack words to interpret my heart ; but I love you.”

He received her in his arms, where she sought refuge to hide her face after these words. She remained there an instant, but suddenly she straightened herself up, seized Octave’s hands, and pressed them convulsively.

“I am lost !” she said in a voice as weak as a dying woman’s.

Instinctively he followed the direction of Clémence’s eyes, which seemed to turn white with terror, and were fastened upon the glass door. An almost imperceptible undulation of the muslin curtain on the closet side of the door was all that he saw. At that moment, a scarcely audible sound was heard,—a light footfall on the floor, clothes rustling against the wainscoting, or a bolt sliding cautiously in its socket,—and the door swung open noiselessly as if it had been set in motion by a ghost.

## XXIII

Madame de Bergenheim tried to rise, but she lacked strength to do so ; she fell on her knees and sank at her lover's feet. Without attempting to support her, he sprang from the couch, stepped across the body that lay in front of him, and drew his dagger.

Christian had appeared in the doorway and stood motionless there. There was a moment of solemn, awful silence. Naught could be heard save the howling of the storm, which seemed to rage with redoubled fury as if to take part in the scene, and a vague rustling caused by the nervous trembling of the half-unconscious woman. She lay writhing on the floor and tearing at the silk covering of the couch in her efforts to cling to it ; soon everything was silent except for the noises out-of-doors, for she lost consciousness, and lay like a dead woman. Only the eyes of the two men spoke ; those of the husband fixed in a threatening, implacable glare, the lover's gleaming with the audacity of desperation.

After a moment of this mutual fascination, the baron stepped into the room.

"One step more and you are a dead man !" said Gerfaut in a hollow voice, and he grasped the hilt of his dagger, pressing his thumb firmly upon the crescent in which it ended.

Christian put out his hand, and answered this threat simply by a glance, but the glance was so contemptuous, the gesture so imperative, that a blade crossed with his would have seemed of less direful import to the lover. Ashamed of his emotion in

presence of such tranquillity, Octave replaced his weapon in its sheath and imitated his enemy's contemptuous attitude.

"Come, monsieur," said the latter in an undertone, stepping back himself as he spoke.

Instead of following him, Gerfaut glanced at Clémence. She was in such a profound swoon that he tried in vain to detect the sound of her breath. He stooped over her, irresistibly impelled by compassion and love; but as he was about taking her in his arms to place her on the couch and try to restore her to consciousness, Bergenheim's hand checked him. He hardly felt the pressure of those iron fingers on his arm, although they might have broken it; the touch, however, was enough to remind him of the duty honor imposed upon him on this ghastly occasion. In presence of the man he had insulted, the slightest sign of interest, the most fleeting indication of affection, would become an additional insult, and there would be a sort of dastardliness in being guilty of such a thing. If there is a being on earth entitled to your consideration and respect, it is beyond question the man whom your unrighteous conduct has made your enemy. So Octave stifled in his heart the passionate grief that was breaking it, and, in obedience to the gesture that had detained him, he stood erect, and said, with a grave, resigned air:

"I am at your service, monsieur."

Christian pointed to the door as if to request him to go out first; thus maintaining with extraordinary self-control the courteous manner which good-breeding makes an indelible habit, but which at that moment was more terrifying than the most furious passion would have been.

Gerfaut once more glanced irresolutely at Clémence, and, pointing to her, said in an almost supplicating tone :

“Do you mean to leave her thus unattended? It would be too cruel to abandon her in this condition.”

“It will not be cruel, but compassionate,” replied Bergenheim coldly: “she will come to herself only too soon.”

Octave’s heart contracted, but his face did not betray his emotion. He hesitated no longer, but left the room. The husband followed him without glancing at the poor woman whose doom his lips pronounced so pitilessly, and she remained alone on the floor of that dainty boudoir, as in a tomb.

The two men descended the spiral staircase, half lighted by the feeble glimmer cast upon its windings by the alabaster lamp. At the door of the library, they were in almost total darkness, but Christian opened a dark lantern with which he was provided, and which afforded sufficient light to guide their steps. They passed in silence through the gallery of portraits and the hall and ascended the main staircase. To see those two figures pass in the middle of the night, their features lighted only by the flickering, yellowish light of the lantern, one would instinctively have felt that some horrible drama, in which they were to play leading parts, was soon to be enacted. Dante, following Virgil through the burned paths of the sorrowing city, did not walk more softly or with more pallid brow than Gerfaut, guided by his host, through the long corridors of the château. Bergenheim preceded him no less cautiously. Fearing that the slightest noise might awaken one of the servants, whose curiosity would have

been keenly aroused by this nocturnal promenade, he held his breath and glided along like a shadow, glancing uneasily into the dark corners that they passed.

They reached the baron's apartments at last, without meeting anybody, and without betraying their presence in any way. With the same self-possession that had characterized his previous conduct, Christian carefully locked the doors, lighted a candelabrum filled with candles that stood upon the mantel-piece, and then turned to his companion, who was much less calm than he.

In circumstances which call for swift decision, amid the rare but solemn crises of life when the briefest reflection causes fatal delay, when spontaneity of action becomes an imperious necessity, men of a poetic temperament are peculiarly at a disadvantage: the imagination, which is so energetic in the meditative hours of solitude, becomes an enemy, sometimes a deadly enemy; there is in that faculty an expansiveness which uselessly expends a vast amount of vital force; at every idea that occurs to it, it gushes forth in divergent streams which exhibit the most varying shades of color, and spread out in the most imperceptible ramifications. But this ever-ready wealth of comprehension, this excessive dilatation of the pores of the mind, exhaust its vigor. They cause a sort of sweat that is fertile for conception, but enervating for action. The imagination thereupon expands so luxuriantly before everything, that it no longer goes to the heart of anything; it becomes blunted without piercing the shell, it is dazzled by its own light, and loses itself in the infinitude of space it has itself thrown open, instead of attaining its goal. It is a



weapon which misses its mark, and whose blows lose their effect as the space it covers increases in extent.

From the time he left the boudoir, Gerfaut was beset by this peculiar species of torture in all its forms. By an inexplicable psychological phenomenon, his mind, instead of going to the heart of this urgent, imperious episode, soared like an eagle into the immeasurable space of the whole drama ; in an instant he was so absorbed in the past and future of his passion that he was almost entirely unmindful of the present. His first interview with Clémence, the different incidents of the past year, so laden with memories, the progress of his attachment from hour to hour, the thousand and one victories, each leading up to the latest, and, last of all, that blissful day changed to a ghastly night, the woman of his heart lost to him and ruined by him, the man before him with whom he must settle his account in blood,—all these visions whirled about before his eyes like the dried leaves which a hurricane sweeps up and twists into a whirling, funnel-shaped cloud.

Unconquerable regret, compassion mingled with despair, a presentiment of disaster that no human power could avert, softened his heart and took full possession of his mind. He saw then in the most odious light the selfishness of his love and the feeling that had spurred him on to make his triumph complete, as if it were a duty he owed himself. This exaction of vanity, common as it is, seemed to him the most dastardly cowardice. He was filled with horror of himself. Clémence's last look, as she fell fainting at his feet,—a look of pardon and of love,—had pierced his heart like a dagger. He had lost her ! lost her ! the woman he loved ! the queen of his

life! the angel of his adoration! lost! The very thought was hell. For some minutes he could not master his emotion: his head swam at the sight of the abyss, dug by his own hand, into which he had hurled the dearest part of his heart. It was as if he were horribly drunk; he was giddy with remorse. The throbbing of the blood in his veins, the convulsive contraction of his nerves, an involuntary horror of what was to come, wrought havoc with his impressionable nature. It was a horrible moment for him, for the violence of his sensations did not take away his perception, and he was conscious that he trembled, but was unable to say, like Bailly: "It is the cold."

Beside that pale face, whereupon innumerable passionate emotions passed and repassed one another like clouds on a stormy day, Bergenheim's brow remained unmoved and lowering, like the northern sky. You would have said he was a marble statue, cold as ice, beside a bronze statue still red-hot from the furnace; or that he was the Commander, about to grasp Don Juan with his sepulchral hand. At that moment, the poet was inferior to the soldier, the lofty intellect was vanquished by the commonplace mind, the enthusiastic temperament by the prosaic but steadfast temperament.

When Bergenheim's eyes met Octave's, they expressed such an implacable thirst for vengeance, they were so swollen with the venom of hate, that the poet shuddered as at the touch of a viper. In face of that outraged husband, whose face and bearing were so instinct with power, the lover realized the inferiority of his own attitude; vanity and keen vexation came to his assistance. Subduing, by a mighty effort of his will, the irresistible distress to which he had yielded for an

instant, he said to his nerves: "Cease trembling," and his nerves became like iron; to his heart: "Beat more calmly," and his heart turned to stone. He postponed regret and remorse to another time; at that moment, even that melancholy expiation was forbidden him; another duty demanded his attention. Such is morality. For certain insults no reparation is possible. Once the road is opened, we must go on to the end; there can be no pardon except upon the tomb of the outraged one.

Octave bowed to this necessity. He stifled in his heart every conscientious scruple that might lessen his firmness, and resumed the disdainful expression that his face ordinarily wore. His eyes flashed back the glance of mortal defiance cast at him by his enemy, and he said, in the tone of a man accustomed to rise superior to the accidents of life and to allow himself under no circumstances to be overawed:

"Before entering into any explanation, it is my duty to say to you, upon my honor, that there is but one guilty party in this matter, and that is myself. The slightest shadow of a reproach addressed to Madame de Bergenheim would be a most unjust insult, a most deplorable error on your part. I went to her apartments without her knowledge and without the slightest authorization from her. I had just gone there when you arrived. Necessity compels me to confess a passion which is an insult to you; I am ready to give you satisfaction for it in every possible way; but, while I submit myself to your discretion upon that point, I must entirely exculpate Madame de Bergenheim from everything that could cast a stain on her virtue or her reputation."

"So far as her reputation is concerned," Christian replied, "I will attend to that ; as for her virtue——"

He did not finish, but his face assumed an expression of incredulous irony.

"I swear to you, monsieur," continued Octave, with emotion, "that she is as much above any possibility of seduction as she should be out of reach of insult ; I swear to you—— What oath can I take to make you believe me? I swear to you that Madame de Bergenheim has been false to none of her obligations to you ; that I have never received the slightest encouragement from her ; that she is as innocent of any share in my madness as the angels in heaven."

Christian's only reply was to shake his head with a contemptuous smile.

"This day will cast a shadow of despair over all the rest of my life, if you do not believe me," continued Gerfaut, with increasing vehemence ; "I tell you, monsieur, that she is innocent ; innocent ! do you hear? I was led astray by a passion she disdained. I determined to take advantage of your absence. You know that I have a key to the library ; I made use of it, without the slightest suspicion of my purpose on her part. Would to God you could have been present at the whole of our interview ! you would have no doubt then. Can a woman prevent a man from entering her apartments against her will, when he has succeeded in obtaining the means? I tell you again——"

"Enough, monsieur," rejoined the baron coldly. "You are doing now what any other man would do in your place, what I would do myself ; but this discussion is superfluous ;

leave the woman to exculpate herself. At this moment, we have to deal only with ourselves."

"But I declare to you upon my honor——"

"Under such circumstances, monsieur, a false oath does not dishonor a man. I have been a bachelor myself, and I know that anything is allowable against a husband. Let us have done with this, I beg you, and come down to the business in hand. I consider myself insulted by you, and you must give me satisfaction for the insult."

Octave bowed his assent without speaking.

"One of us two must die," continued Bergenheim, resting his elbow negligently on the mantel-shelf.

The lover bowed gravely a second time.

"I have insulted you," he said, "and it is for you to decide what reparation I owe you."

"There is but one possible reparation, monsieur. Blood alone can wash away the stain; you know that as well as I do. You have dishonored me, and you owe me your life. If fate favors you, you will be rid of me, and I shall have been put in the wrong in every way.—There are some arrangements to be made, and we will consider them at once, if you please."

He put forward an arm-chair which he offered to Gerfaut, and took another for himself. They sat at opposite sides of a desk that stood in the middle of the room, and prepared to go into the details of this murderous discussion with an equal degree of imperturbable coolness and haughty courtesy.

"I do not need to tell you," said Octave, "that I accede beforehand to whatever it may suit you to decide upon: weapons, place, seconds——"

"One moment," Bergenheim interposed; "just now you spoke to me in that woman's behalf in a way to make me think you would not care to ruin her in the eyes of the world; I hope, therefore, that you will accept the proposition I am about to submit to you. An ordinary duel between us would arouse suspicion, and would inevitably lead to the discovery of the truth; a plausible pretext would be sought for it, no matter what one we might put forward before the seconds. Between a young man visiting in a house and a husband, you know, there is one reason for a duel that occurs to everybody instantly. However ours may result, that woman's honor would remain on the field with the dead man, and that is what I wish to avoid, for she bears my name."

"Explain your purpose," said Octave, unable to guess his adversary's meaning.

"You know, monsieur," said Bergenheim, in his still impassive voice, "that there is an article in the Code by virtue of which I should have had the right to kill you a moment ago, at the expense of a very trifling penalty; I did not do it, for two reasons; in the first place, a gentleman uses a sword and not a dagger, and then your body would have embarrassed me."

"Is not the river close by?" queried Gerfaut, with a meaning smile.

Christian gazed fixedly at him for a moment, then resumed in a slightly altered voice:

"Instead of availing myself of my right, I propose to risk my life against yours. The danger is the same for me, who have never insulted you, as for you, who have put upon me

the deadliest affront with which a man can ruin another's life. In that way, the game is one-sided from the beginning; but you will understand that, if a single person in the world could suspect the real reason of our duel, it would become a thousand times more so. You would risk no more, while I, living or dead, should be publicly dishonored. Now I am ready to stake my life, but not my honor."

"If you desire a duel without seconds, I consent; I have perfect confidence in your honor, and I trust you are able to say as much for mine."

Christian bowed slightly and continued:

"I desire something more than a duel without seconds, for it is most essential that the result should be considered an accident; there is no other way of preventing the noise and the scandal which I dread. This is the proposition I have to make: You know there is to be a boar-hunt to-morrow in the Mares wood; when the time comes, we will take our places at a spot I know, where we shall be out of sight of the other hunters. When the boars are driven in by the beaters and pass through the ring, we will fire at each other at a preconcerted signal. In that way, the catastrophe, whatever it may be, will pass for one of those accidents which are by no means infrequent in hunting."

"I am a dead man," was the thought of Gerfaut, when he saw that the rifle was the weapon selected by his adversary, and remembered the extraordinary skill with that weapon which he had seen him exhibit. But, far from betraying the least hesitation, his expression became more haughty than ever.



“That species of duel seems to me very cleverly devised,” said he: “I agree to it, for I am as desirous as yourself that this unhappy affair shall be enveloped in secrecy forever.”

“As we have no seconds,” continued Bergenheim, “we must arrange everything, to the smallest details, for ourselves, so that nothing may betray us; one would hardly believe what overwhelming testimony is sometimes afforded by the most trivial circumstances. I was on the jury recently, and we convicted a man of a capital offence on the strength of a piece of wadding. Let us try to prevent anything of that sort. I think I have provided for everything. If you find that I have forgotten anything, I should be glad if you would call my attention to it.—The place I mentioned is a narrow path, but unobstructed and straight. The ground is perfectly level; it runs north and south, so that we shall have the sun at one side at eight in the morning, and there will be no advantage of position. There is an old elm on the edge of the wood, and along the path about fifty paces away the stump of an oak that was cut this year; we will take our places at those two points, if you please. Is the distance satisfactory to you?”

“Near or far, it makes little difference. Point-blank, if you choose.”

“Any shorter distance would be imprudent. In hunting, we never stand less than fifty paces from one another. Besides, fifty paces with the rifle is less than fifteen with the pistol. The first point is settled, then.—We will keep our hats on, although it is not customary. A bullet might strike the head where the cap should be, and if there were no hole in

the cap, suspicion would be aroused, for we don't hunt bare-headed."

Bergenheim went on to enter into innumerable details attesting the marvellous forethought with which he had provided for every incident that can possibly be anticipated in an event of that sort. Octave could not restrain a thrill of admiration at the sight of this impassive, clear-headed, energetic passion, which played with preparations for death as a young girl plays with the flowers she is to wear in her hair at the ball. He considered that his self-esteem was involved in maintaining itself at the level of this contempt for life, and he entered into the discussion of his antagonist's propositions, article by article, with no less coolness and tranquillity of demeanor.

"It only remains for us now," said Christian, "to decide which of us shall fire first."

"You, of course; you are the insulted party."

"You do not admit the insult in its entirety; it is in dispute, therefore, and I cannot be judge and litigant at the same time. We must resort to lot."

"I tell you that I will not fire first," rejoined Gerfaut earnestly.

"Remember that it is a duel to the death, and that such delicacy is puerile.—Let us agree that the one who wins the toss shall station himself on the edge of the wood and await the signal, which the other will give when the boards break through the ring."

He took a coin from his purse and threw it into the air.

"Heads!" said the lover, compelled to acquiesce in his adversary's wish.

"You have won the toss," said Christian, with a careless glance at the coin; "but remember, that, when I give the signal, if you do not shoot, or if you shoot in the air, I shall make the most of my right to fire. You know that I rarely miss my aim."

The preliminaries being at an end, the baron took two guns from a closet, loaded them with ball, calling attention to the fact that they were of the same length and calibre. He then locked them up in a wardrobe, took out the key, and handed it to Gerfaut.

"I wouldn't offer you such an insult," said the latter.

"Indeed, it is a useless precaution; to-morrow you shall make your selection. Now, that everything is settled," he continued in a grave tone, "I have a request to make of you, and I deem you too honorable to refuse to gratify it. Give me your oath, that, whatever the result of our meeting, you will maintain absolute secrecy concerning this whole episode. My honor is at your mercy now; as between gentlemen, I call upon you to respect it."

"If I have the melancholy good fortune to survive," replied Gerfaut, no less solemnly, "I swear with all my heart to do as you request. But I also have a question to put to you, assuming the contrary result.—What are your intentions with relation to Madame de Bergenheim?"

Christian looked up at his adversary, whose keen, penetrating eyes seemed determined to read his most secret thoughts.

"My intentions!" he said in a tone denoting surprise and displeasure; "that is a strange question; I do not acknowledge your right to ask it."

"My right to do so is of extraordinary origin, I admit," rejoined the lover, with a bitter smile; "but such as it is, I will use it. I have destroyed this woman's happiness forever; if I cannot repair my crime, I ought, at all events, to lessen its effects so far as my power extends. So be good enough to answer me: if I die to-morrow, what will be her fate?"

Bergenheim did not answer, but lowered his eyes, with a pensive, sombre expression.

"Look you, monsieur," Gerfaut continued, with deep emotion; "when I say to you: 'She is not guilty,' you refuse to believe me, and I despair of persuading you because I understand your suspicion. And yet those words may be the last that will ever issue from my mouth, and you know that a dying man's words may be believed. If you are revenged on me to-morrow, let that expiation suffice, I implore you.—You see I do not blush to entreat you thus; I would make that request on my knees.—Be kind; spare her. I do not ask you to forgive her, but to take pity on her innocence. Treat her gently—honorably.—Do not make her too unhappy——"

He stopped, for his voice failed him, and he felt tears in his eyes.

"I know what I ought to do," replied the baron, his voice as harsh as Gerfaut's was fervid and pleading; "I am her husband, and I acknowledge nobody's right, yours least of all, to interfere between her and myself."

"I foresee the fate you have in store for her," retorted the lover, with restrained indignation; "you will not shed her blood, for that would be imprudent; what would become of

your honor? But you will kill her by slow degrees; you will force her to die a new death every day to satisfy your blind thirst for vengeance. You are a man to plan every detail of her torture as calmly as you made all the arrangements for our duel a moment ago."

Instead of replying, Bergenheim lighted a candle, as if to put an end to the discussion.

"Until to-morrow, monsieur," he said, with a glacial air.

"One moment," cried Gerfaut, rising; "do you refuse to say one word to reassure me as to the fate of a woman whom my love has destroyed?"

"I have no answer to give you."

"Very well, then; it is for me to protect her, and I will do it, in spite of you and against your will."

"Not another word!" exclaimed the baron wrathfully.

Octave leaned upon the desk that stood between them, and gazed at him for an instant with the eye of an eagle about to pounce upon his prey.

"You killed Lambernier!" he suddenly exclaimed in a voice of thunder.

Christian jumped back as if he had been struck, and his lips contracted slightly.

"I was a witness of the murder," continued Gerfaut slowly, and emphasizing every word; "I propose to write down my testimony and send it to a man of whom I am as sure as of myself. If I die to-morrow, I shall bequeath to him a mission which no efforts you may make can prevent him from carrying out; he will watch your every act with inexorable diligence; he will be Madame de Bergenheim's protector if you forget

that it is your first duty to protect her. On the day that you abuse your power over her, on the day that she says 'Help me!'—on that day my statement will be deposited with the royal court at Nancy. It will be believed, be sure of that. Besides, the river is an untrustworthy grave; before long it will give up the body you entrusted to it. You will be tried and convicted. Do you know the penalty of murder? it is hard labor for life."

At these last words, Bergenheim darted to the mantel-piece, snatched a hunting-knife that hung on the wall, and drew the blade from the sheath.

When Octave saw that he was preparing to attack him, he folded his arms across his chest and simply said, coolly:

"Remember that my body will embarrass you; one is quite enough."

The baron threw the knife on the floor so violently that it was broken.

"You yourself," he said in a trembling voice,—“you yourself are Lambernier's murderer. He knew this infamous secret, and his death was unintentional on my part.”

"The intention and the original blame are of little consequence. The act is the important thing. Any jury in the country would convict you, and that is what I want, for your conviction would entitle her to a judicial separation and restore her liberty."

"You are not speaking seriously," rejoined Christian, turning pale; "you will denounce me! you! a gentleman! Do you know that there is only one word on a level with the word 'coward'? that is the word 'informer.' And would not

my conviction also smirch this woman in whom you take so much interest?"

He lowered his voice as he said these words, for he was secretly ashamed of employing such an argument and of bringing his wife's name into a discussion in which he saw that he was at his adversary's mercy.

"I know all that," was the reply; "I, too, am solicitous for the honor of my name, and yet I endanger it. I have plenty of enemies who will be only too happy to insult my memory. Public opinion will condemn me, for it will see only the act, and the act is odious enough. No one will know the facts that make it a duty which I must perform. I feel much greater regret to think that another person may be injured by the blow dealt in her defence; but those arguments must give way before another unanswerable one. There is something more valuable and more necessary than the good opinion of the world, and that is a quiet life, the inviolability of grief,—in a word, the right to live; and that is what, in default of happiness, I propose to bequeath to her whom fate has made subject to your authority, but whom I will not leave at your mercy."

"I am her husband," said Bergenheim in a tone of concentrated rage.

"Yes, you are her husband: and so the law is with you. You have but to invoke all the powers of society; they will come at your call to assist you to crush a defenceless woman. And I, who love her as you have never dreamed of loving her, can do nothing for her! Living, I must hold my peace and bow before your superior right; but dead, your absurd laws



have no further existence for me ; dead, I can place myself between you and her, and I will do it. As I have not the choice of weapons with which to go to her assistance, I will not recoil from the only one that is offered me. Yes, if I am compelled to resort to the ignominy of denunciation in order to save her from your vengeance, I swear, here and now, that I will denounce you. I will fasten that stigma upon my name ; I will pick up that stone out of the mud ; the mud will be for me, but the stone for you, and I will break your head with it."

"Those are the words of a dastard !" exclaimed Christian, dropping upon a chair.

Gerfaut looked at him a moment with the calm domination of a superior will.

"No insults !" said he ; "to-morrow one of us will have ceased to live ; if I fall in this duel, be content with that, for your own sake. I submit to death for my own portion, but for HER I demand liberty, peace, and respect. Mark what I say : at the first insult, my ghost will rise from the grave to preserve her from a second, to dig between her and you a ditch that you cannot pass—the galleys !"

## XXIV

After recovering consciousness, Madame de Bergenheim remained for some time in a state of torpor in which she was only vaguely conscious of her own sensations. When she first opened her eyes, she caught a glimpse of the curtains of her bed, upon which she was lying, and thinking at first

that she had awakened from an ordinary nap, she tried to go to sleep again. Little by little, a few ideas lighted up the darkness of her mind. Half conscious of what had befallen her, she opened her eyes and saw that she was fully dressed ; at the same time, she remarked that her bedroom was much more brightly lighted than by the night-light that usually burned there during the night. Between the half-drawn curtains she saw a gigantic shadow reaching to the ceiling on the wood-work opposite the bed. She sat up and saw distinctly a man sitting at the corner of the hearth. As she recognized her husband, Clémence fell back upon the pillow, frozen with terror. Then she remembered everything, and the scene in the boudoir passed before her mind to the smallest detail. She felt quite ready to faint a second time when she heard Christian's footsteps, which made the floor creak, although he walked very carefully. Acting on a puerile impulse, she lay with her eyes closed, hoping that he would think she was asleep, but her irregular breathing betrayed her agitation and her terror.

The baron looked at her an instant in silence, then drew back the curtains.

"You can't pass the night so," he said ; "it is nearly three o'clock. You must go to bed as usual."

Clémence shuddered from head to foot at these words, although there was nothing harsh in his tone. She obeyed with machine-like docility, without replying ; but as soon as she tried to stand, she was obliged to lean against the bed, for her trembling legs were powerless to support her.

"Have no fear of me," said Bergenheim, moving a few steps away. "My presence here has no meaning at which you

need be alarmed. I simply desire that it should be known that I passed the night in your room, for my return might possibly arouse some suspicion. You will readily understand that our attachment is simply a comedy for the benefit of the servants."

There was a bitter irony in the affected levity of his words that rent her heart to its lowest depths. She expected an explosion of rage, but not this tranquil contempt. Her rebellious pride restored her courage to some extent.

"I do not deserve to be treated so by you," said she; "do not condemn me without hearing me."

"I ask you nothing," replied Christian, resuming his seat by the hearth; "undress, and go to sleep if you can. It is useless to have Justine making remarks to-morrow about your night-clothes, or about the alteration in your looks."

This time, instead of obeying, she followed him and tried to remain standing while she spoke to him; but her emotion took away all her strength. She was obliged to sit down.

"You treat me too harshly, Christian," she said, when she had succeeded in steadying her voice. "I am not guilty—not so guilty as you think," she added, hanging her head.

He watched her closely a moment, and then answered without the slightest trace of emotion in his voice:

"You must realize that I desire nothing so much as to be persuaded by you. I know that appearances are often deceitful; perhaps you will succeed in explaining to me what took place to-night; I am still inclined to believe what you say. Swear that you do not love Monsieur de Gerfaut."

"I swear it," she said in a feeble voice, without raising her eyes.

He took down a small silver crucifix that hung at the head of the bed.

"Swear it upon this Christ," he said, handing it to his wife.

She tried in vain to raise her hand, which seemed nailed to the arm of her chair.

"I swear it," she stammered a second time, while her face became pale as death.

A savage laugh like a serpent's hiss escaped from Christian's lips. Without another word, he replaced the crucifix, then opened the secret panel between the windows, and placed the violet-wood box on the table in front of his wife. At sight of it, she made a movement as if to seize it, but her courage failed her, and she leaned back, seeking a support.

"False to your husband and false to your God!" said Bergenheim slowly. "In Heaven's name, do you realize what sort of a woman you are?"

Clémence for a long time was unable to reply; her respiration was so labored that it seemed at every breath as if she would stifle; her head, after rolling vaguely from side to side on the back of the chair, in a vain attempt to find a less painful position, finally fell forward on her breast, like an ear of corn broken by the wind.

"If you have read those letters," she murmured, when she had recovered sufficient strength to speak, "you must have seen that I am not so unworthy as you say. I am very guilty—but I am still entitled to forgiveness."

At that moment, if Christian had been endowed with the faculty of comprehending the mysteries of the heart, he might, perhaps, have reknit a bond that was on the point of

breaking ; we do not mean, of course, that he would have been justified in hoping for a very bountiful harvest of legitimate affection from the field in which the tare of adulterous love had flourished ; but even though it were impossible for him to kindle a passion which almost never follows a marriage of which it was not the moving cause, he might at least have stopped Clémence upon a dangerous incline ; and, by fortifying himself with his crushing knowledge of her partial fall, have saved her from an irreparable fall. But his nature was too commonplace to grasp the fine distinction between weakness and vice, between the intoxication of a loving heart and the depravity of an essentially corrupt nature. With the obstinacy characteristic of limited intellects, he carried everything to its extreme consequence, and almost always formed conclusions that went beyond the truth. For some hours his wife's guilt had been decided in his mind ; this conviction was the basis of his conduct, and he clung to it with a tenacity that was deaf to every attempt at refutation.—His features still wore a hopelessly impassive mask, as he listened to the words of justification which Clémence put forward in a feeble, broken voice.

“I know that I have deserved your hatred,—but if you could understand how I suffer, you would forgive me. You left me at Paris, very young—inexperienced.—I ought to have made a better fight, but I exhausted my strength in the struggle.—You see how pale and changed I am since a year ago.—I have aged several years in one ; indeed, I am not yet what is called an—abandoned woman. He must have told you so——”

"Of course he did," replied Christian, ironically; "oh! you have a very loyal knight in him!"

"You do not believe me! you do not believe me!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands in despair; "then read those letters—the latest ones. Tell me if that is the way a man writes to a woman who is guilty of the worst."

She tried to take the package which her husband had in his hand. Instead of giving it to her, he held it to a candle and tossed it all ablaze on the hearth. Clémence uttered a shriek and rushed forward to recover it, but Christian seized her waist with his iron hand and held her down upon her chair.

"I can understand that you think a great deal of that correspondence," he said in a less tranquil tone than he had used thus far; "but you are more affectionate than prudent. Allow me to destroy testimony that tends to prove your guilt. Do you know that I have already killed one man because of these letters?"

"Killed!" cried Madame de Bergenheim, maddened by his words, for she did not understand their real meaning, and applied them to her lover;—"then kill me, too, for I lied when I said that I repented. I do not repent; I am guilty; I have been false to you. I love him and I abhor you; I love him! kill me—I love him—oh! kill me!"

She had thrown herself on her knees at his feet, and was dragging herself along the floor, striking her head against it, trying to beat her brains out. Christian lifted her up and forced her to sit down in her chair, notwithstanding her resistance. For some time he had great difficulty in holding her

down, so powerful was the nervous paroxysm that contracted all her muscles. She writhed in her husband's arms, in horrible convulsions, and the only sounds that issued from her mouth were those same words repeated over and over in a stifled, gasping voice, with the monotony of insanity:

"I love him! kill me! I love him! kill me!"

Her suffering was so horrible to see, that Bergenheim was moved to pity at last.

"You misunderstood me," said he; "it is not he who is dead."

She became perfectly still, and said nothing more. Moved by a feeling of compassion, he left her and returned to his place. They remained for some time thus, sitting at the opposite corners of the hearth; he with his head resting against the marble mantel, she crouching in her chair, with her face hidden in her hands; farther apart in their nuptial chamber than if a whole world lay between them; the pendulum of the clock alone disturbed the silence and accompanied the gloomy musing of the husband and the wife with its monotonous vibrations.

A sharp noise that seemed to come from one of the windows suddenly interrupted this silent, depressing scene. Clémence sprang to her feet as if she had received an electric shock; her frightened eyes met her husband's, who was likewise aroused from his melancholy reflections by the unexpected incident. He made an imperative motion with his hand to enjoin silence upon her, and they both listened attentively and anxiously.

The same noise was repeated. There was a sort of rustling against the wooden blind, followed immediately by a sharp



metallic sound, evidently produced by a hard object coming in contact with the glass.

"It is a signal," said Christian in a low voice, looking at his wife. "You must know what it means."

"I have no idea, I give you my oath," replied Clémence, her heart beating fast under the spur of this fresh excitement.

"I will tell you, then; he is there, and has something to say to you. Get up and open the window."

"Open the window!" she said, with a dismayed air.

"Do what I tell you. Do you want him to pass the night under your windows, so that some servant may see him?"

At this command, uttered in a stern voice, she rose. Observing that the projection of both their shadows on the ceiling might be seen from without when the curtains were drawn aside, Bergenheim changed the position of the candles. Clémence walked slowly toward the window from which the sound came; she had no sooner opened it than a purse fell upon the floor.

"Now close the window," said the baron;—while his wife obeyed with the passive docility that rendered her incapable of any personal exertion of will-power, he picked up the purse which had been rolled in a ball to make it easier to throw, and took from it the following note:

"I have ruined you, you for whom I would gladly have died! Of what avail now are my regret and my despair? All my blood would not wipe away one of your tears. Our position is so terrible that I tremble to speak of it to you. But I must tell you the truth, horrible as it is. Do not curse me, Clémence; do not impute to me the fatality that requires

me to torment you to the end. In a few hours I shall have expiated the crime I committed in loving you, or you will yourself be free. Free!—forgive me for using the word, for I feel how hateful a word it is, but I am too bewildered to search for another. Whatever happens, it is my duty to place at your disposal the only assistance it is possible for me to offer you, to give you at least a choice of evils. If you are never to see me again, to live with HIM would perhaps be greater torture than you have courage to endure, for you love me.—In the contrary case—here words fail me. I can find none to express my thoughts, and I dare not offer you advice or appeal to you. All that I am conscious of is the need of telling you that my whole existence belongs to you, that I am yours until death; but I almost lack courage to lay at your feet the offering of a destiny, already so melancholy, and soon perhaps to be drowned in blood.—A fatal necessity sometimes forces us to do what public opinion condemns, but the heart justifies us, for it alone can understand what we do. Soon, perhaps, you will feel the need of being free in order to suffer, because you will find all those about you so pitiless to your grief. This right to suffer it is my duty to assure you, in case you should be compelled to demand it. Do not be angry at what I am about to write; such words as I long to say to you were never uttered by a more despairing heart. Throughout the day a post-chaise will wait on the outskirts of the plateau of Montigny; a fire on top of the cliff, which you can see from your room, will give you notice of its presence. In a very short time you can reach the Rhine. A trustworthy person will be ready to escort you to Munich, to a relative of

mine whose character and position will assure you an inviolable and secure refuge beneath her roof. If your aunt or the other members of your family do not afford you sufficient protection, that which I offer you will place you out of reach of all tyranny. There you will, at all events, be at liberty to weep!—This is all that I can do for you.—My heart is broken when I think of the helplessness of my affection. When you crush the scorpion upon the wound into which it has injected its venom, the wound is cured; and even if my death cannot repair the injury I have inflicted upon you, it would be simply one pang more. I did not know that such cruel refinement of torture was possible. Can you understand the utter desperation of my feelings at this moment? To win your love has long been the only aspiration of my heart, and I must needs repent that I have lived to see it gratified. In pity for you, I must hope that your love for me is as perishable as my life, so that my memory may not destroy your peace of mind, and that you may sleep upon my grave.—All this is so ghastly that I have not the courage to go on. Adieu, Clémence! Once more, for the last time, I would I might say to you: I love you. But I dare not. I feel that I am unworthy to speak so to you, for there is a curse upon my love. Am not I the cause of your ruin?—The only words that I feel that I may still say to you are those which even the assassin dares to say to God, with his knees and his forehead on the marble flags of the church: Forgive me!”

The baron, after he had read the letter, passed it to his wife without a word, and resumed his sombre, thoughtful attitude.

"You see what he asks you?" he said, after a considerable interval, remarking the dazed expression in Madame de Bergeheim's eyes as they ran over the paper.

"My head is so confused," she said, "that I am not sure if I understand.—What does he say about death?"

Christian's lips contracted in a disdainful smile.

"He isn't talking about you," he said; "we don't kill the women."

"They die without it," replied Clémence; and then she paused for a long time, unable to go on, gazing at her husband with haggard, frightened eyes.

"You are to fight!" she cried in a tone that no words in any language could describe.

"Really, have you guessed that?" he replied, with an ironical smile; "your perspicacity is something marvellous. You said truly. We are all playing our proper parts, you see. The wife deceives her husband, the husband fights with the lover, and the lover, for a fitting close to the comedy, proposes an elopement to the wife, for that is the gist of his letter underlying all his oratorical precautions."

"Fight!" she repeated, with the energy born of utter desperation, and she rose as she spoke. "Fight!—and for me, unworthy, miserable wretch that I am! I am the one who should die! What have you done? And is not he at liberty to love? I alone am guilty, I alone have insulted you, and I alone should be punished. Do with me what you choose, monsieur; imprison me in a convent, in a dungeon; bring me poison and I will drink it."

The baron gave vent to a peal of sardonic laughter.

"You are really afraid I will kill him for you, are you?" he said, gazing fixedly at her, his arms folded across his breast.

"I am afraid for you, for us all. Do you imagine that I can live after I have been the cause of bloodshed? If you must have a victim, take me—or, at least, begin with me. In pity's name! say that you will not fight."

"Remember that you have a chance of becoming free, as he himself reminds you."

"Spare me!" she murmured, shuddering with horror.

"It is a pity that there should be bloodshed in it, is it not?" continued Bergenheim, with relentless mockery; "adultery would be very sweet but for that. I am sure that you consider me very brutal and vulgar to take your honor so seriously, more so than you do yourself."

"Mercy!"

"I have to crave mercy at your hands. That amazes you, doesn't it?—So long as I live, I shall know how to protect your reputation in spite of you; but if I die, try to take better care of it yourself. Be content with having betrayed me, and do not insult my memory. I am overjoyed now that we have no children, for I should fear you on their account, and should feel compelled to deprive you of all authority over them so far as I could do so. That is one cause of vexation less. But as you bear my name, and I cannot take it from you, I beg you not to drag it in the mud when I am no longer at hand to cleanse it."

At these cruel words, the young woman sank into her chair as if all the fibres of her heart had broken one after another.

"You crush me to earth!" said she feebly.

"That disgusts you," continued her husband, who seemed, in his thirst for vengeance, to select the sharpest arrows in his quiver; "you are young; this is your first step, and you are not accustomed yet to these episodes. Never fear, one can accustom one's self to anything. A lover always has fine phrases at hand to console the widow and overcome her repugnance. He has begun already in his letter. If you become free, he will talk to you about Italy, England, America. He will tell you that you can live anywhere; that although the crime—oh no! he won't say the crime; he will say passion, oppressed love—that, although your passion is proscribed in France, it can hold up its head anywhere else in the world."

"You are killing me—monsieur," she murmured, falling back, almost unconscious, upon her chair.

Christian leaned toward her and grasped her arm, casting a withering glance upon her.

"Mark my words," said he; "if he kills me to-morrow and then asks you to go with him, you will be an infamous wretch if you comply. He is a man to exhibit you as a trophy.—Don't twist about so; such things have been known before.—He is a man to drag you in his train like a harlot."

"Air! air!—in pity's name!—I am dying!"

Clémence closed her eyes, and her lips moved convulsively. As she fell over upon the arm of the chair, the vindictive cruelty that had dictated the baron's words was somewhat allayed. Having tortured her heart without pity, he was moved and almost disarmed by the sight of her physical suffering. The inanimate creature he had just crushed with his scorn aroused in him a sensation resembling remorse, and he

lavished the necessary attentions upon her with something like affection. He undressed her and placed her in bed without a sign of life on her part. Feeling sure that her condition was in no wise dangerous and was simply a sort of general prostration caused by a succession of violent emotions, he left her as soon as he saw her eyes open, and resumed his place at the corner of the fire-place. The rest of the night passed without further incident. To see that man sitting in perfect silence, with his head resting on his hands, and, a few steps away, that woman lying in her bed, as pale and motionless as a corpse, one would have imagined that the scene before him was a watch with the dead rather than a conjugal *tête-à-tête*. From time to time, a vague snapping of the wood-work, a distant breath of the expiring storm, or a stifled groan from the alcove, feebly disturbed the silence. The sound of the clock striking the hours, repeated a moment later, like an echo, by the great clock in the tower, had the effect of a funeral knell. The candles, after burning down to their paper *bobèches*, flickered and sank lower and lower, like the tapers that surround a bier, and Christian did not think of lighting others in their stead. Insensibly their light became of no account. Pale rays began to filter through the blinds. The light that caused the different articles of furniture to cast shadows on the wall changed color; from yellow it became gray, and then grew whiter and whiter as it flowed in in increasing waves.

At the same time, a marked fall in the temperature announced the break of day. The morning crowing of the cock was followed in a moment by the baying of the dogs in their



kennel, and lastly, by the concert of the birds as they awoke in the garden. The night was at an end and a new day had begun, radiant with promise for the majority of mankind, but for some filled with menace and terror.

The first rays of dawn looked in upon a very different scene in the opposite wing of the château. Behind the green curtains of his alcove, Marillac had been sleeping for many hours the most peaceful sleep that it has been given to man to enjoy here on earth, when he was suddenly awakened by a rude shock that nearly threw him out of his bed.

"Go to the devil!" he said angrily, when he had succeeded in opening his eyes half-way, and recognized Gerfaut standing by his pillow.

"Get up!" said his friend, pulling him by the arm to give more force to the command.

The artist pulled the bedclothes up to his chin.

"Are you walking in your sleep, or mad?" said he; "or do you propose to set me at work?" he added, noticing that Gerfaut had some papers in his hand. "You know perfectly well that I never have my wits about me when I am fasting, and that I'm stupid as a fool till noon."

"Get up at once," said Gerfaut again; "I must speak to you."

There was something so solemn and urgent in the tone in which these words were uttered, that Marillac, without further debate, rose and began to dress precipitately.

"For God's sake, what's the matter?" he asked, as he threw on his dressing-gown; "you have a regular fifth act of a melodrama expression."

"Put on your coat and your boots," said Octave; "you must go to La Fauconnerie. The servants are accustomed to see you go out early in the morning since your appointments with Reine, and——"

"Do you propose that I should begin that pastoral again?" the artist hastily broke in, beginning to undress; "in that case, I am going back to bed. I've had enough bucolic business."

"I am to fight with Bergenheim in a few hours," said Gerfaut in an undertone.

"*Stupendo!*" cried Marillac, stepping back, and he stood motionless as a statue.

Without wasting time in superfluous explanations, his friend briefly sketched the events of the night.

"Now," said he, "I need your help; can I rely upon your friendship?"

"In life and death!" Marillac replied; and he pressed his hand with the emotion the bravest man feels at the near approach of the peril that threatens one who is dear to him.

"This," continued Gerfaut, handing him one of the papers he held, "is a note for you; in it you will find detailed instructions; it will serve as your guide as circumstances may direct.—This sealed paper is to be deposited by you at the office of the prosecuting attorney of the royal court at Nancy, in the event mentioned and explained in the note I just handed you.—Lastly, this paper is my will. I have no near relatives; I make you my heir."

"May I be an academician if I accept the inheritance!" exclaimed the artist in a faltering voice, and he turned his

head to hide an attack of emotion, much out of place, according to his views, under such serious circumstances.

"Listen to me; I know no more honest man than you, and that is why I choose you. This legacy is a trust. I am speaking now on the assumption that certain things will happen, which, very probably, will not happen at all, but I must provide for every emergency. I cannot say what effect this business may have on Clémence's fate; her aunt, who is very strait-laced, may break with her and disinherit her; her personal fortune is not considerable, I fancy, and I know nothing of the provisions of her marriage-contract. She may, therefore, be left entirely at her husband's mercy, and that is what I cannot allow. And so I give you my fortune in trust, to be held by you at her disposal whenever she may require it. I trust that she loves me enough not to decline a service the impropriety of which death will have removed."

"Well and good!" said Marillac; "I confess that the idea of inheriting from you made my neck feel as if it were in a slip-knot."

"I beg you, however, to accept all my rights as author.—You cannot refuse that," continued Gerfaut, with a half-smile; "the legacy enters the domain of art. To whom should I leave them if not to you, my Patroclus, my faithful collaborator?"

The artist strode up and down the room several times, deeply moved.

"I wish," he cried, "that all dramas and vaudevilles, present and future, were at the bottom of the Seine, and that this duel need not take place.—However, in case of

disaster, I accept your legacy. I will devote it to the publication of a complete edition of your works—large size—that will outshine the Châteaubriand.”

Gerfaut stopped him in the middle of his promenade, and smiled as he pressed his hand.

“Good fellow!” he said, “you are always thinking of glory. In truth, I care but little for mine, but I am grateful to you for the thought. If you carry out this plan of editing me in full, insert my portrait by Devéria as a frontispiece. The two others are horrible things that make me blush. I prefer that posterity, if it admires my genius, should not get it into its head that I was as ugly as Pellisson.”

The mocking tone in which these words were uttered redoubled Marillac’s grief and emotion.

“To think,” he cried, “that I saved that brigand Bergenheim’s life!—If he kills you, I will never forgive him. But I told you this would end in a tragedy.”

“*What was he doing in that galley?*—Eh? What would you have? We run after the drama; that’s the whole story. I am not anxious for myself, but for her.—Unhappy woman! A duel is a stone that may fall on a man’s head twenty times a day; if a dandy squints at you, or a clumsy brute treads on your foot, that is all that is necessary; but she—poor angel!—I will not think of her. I need my head and my heart. It is growing lighter; we haven’t a moment to lose. You must go down to the stable and saddle a horse for yourself if none of the ostlers are about; you will go to La Fauconnerie, as I said; I saw a post-chaise standing in the court-yard of the inn; you will have horses put to it, and wait all day on the outskirts of

the plateau of Montigny. But you will find all that you have to do explained in detail in the note I handed you. Here is my purse ; I have no need of money."

Marillac put the purse in his pocket and the papers in his wallet ; he buttoned his riding-coat to the chin, and pulled a travelling-cap over his ears. His features, at once sad and determined, denoted a state of excitement which scorned for the moment the pacific theories he had laid down a few days before.

"Rely upon me as upon yourself," he said with energy. "If the poor woman throws herself into my arms, I promise you that I will be her faithful squire. I will escort her wherever she wishes to go ; to China if she asks me to, even if all the *gendarmerie* in the kingdom were at my heels. And if Bergenheim kills you and pursues her, there will be daggers in the air."

As he spoke, he took his dagger and two small pistols from the mantel-piece and put them in his pocket, after scrutinizing the point of the one and the caps on the other.

"Adieu !" said Gerfaut.

"Adieu !" echoed the artist, whose extreme agitation was in striking contrast to his friend's calmness. "Have no fear, I will answer for her—and I will publish your complete edition. But what was your idea of assenting to such an outlandish kind of a duel ? Did ever any one hear of fighting with rifles ? he had no right to demand it."

"Make haste ; you must be off before the servants are up."

"Embrace me, my dear boy," said Marillac, with tears in his eyes ; "this isn't very manly, but my feelings are stronger

than I am.—Oh ! these women ! I adore them most assuredly, but at this moment, like Nero, I wish they had only one head.—To think that we stand up to be shot at for those dolls ! ”

“ You can curse them on your way,” said Octave, impatient for him to start.

“ Oh ! *sacrebleu*, yes !—They can flatter themselves that they inspire a *carabiné* hatred in me at this moment.—And our drama ;—a veritable masterpiece of a drama ! ”

“ Don’t make any noise,” said his friend, opening the door cautiously.

Marillac pressed his hand a last time, and went out. At the end of the corridor, he stopped, and retraced his steps.

“ Above all things,” he said, putting his head in at the half-open door, “ no absurd nonsense. Remember that one of you must remain on the ground, and that, if you miss him, he won’t miss you. Take your time—aim carefully—and—fire, as if he were a rabbit ! ”

With this last injunction, he took his leave ; and ten minutes later, Gerfaut, who had remained in the artist’s room, saw him riding out of the court-yard as fast as Bewerley’s four legs could carry him.

## XXV

The most radiant sun that ever glorified a day in September had risen upon the château. The valley all about, washed clean by the storm, was as fresh and smiling as a young girl

just out of her bath. The cliffs seemed like bands of silver around its brow ; the woods, a green cloak draped about its shoulders. The ploughed lands that encircled the forest caused the trees to stand out in bold relief against their dark-brown background. A few cattle, of the sturdy breed that Brascassat paints, stood about the fields in ruminating, fawn-colored groups, giving animation to the scene ; the birds in the tree-tops were drying their rain-drenched wings ; and the joyous rustling of the foliage responded with its ceaseless chatter to the lowing that resounded in the pastures.

There was unusual bustle in the various court-yards of the château. The servants ran hither and thither with a terrified air, while the dogs, held in leash, executed a concert of discordant barking, and the horses, sharing the instinctive presentiment, pawed the ground vigorously and tried to snatch their reins from the hands of the grooms who were holding them. Farther on, a party of farm-hands, armed with long staves, were gaily drinking their morning glass to the master's health ; in a corner, a number of children were fighting with switches, with the turbulence peculiar to their years, by way of preparation for the pleasures of the boar-hunt. The word of command to depart set the whole impatient, joyous multitude in motion. The beaters, under the leadership of an experienced huntsman, left the court-yard and started for Mares wood by a short cut through the park paths. A whipper-in went ahead with the dogs, following the plane-tree avenue. Soon a small party of sportsmen, composed of almost the same personages we have heretofore introduced to our readers, descended the steps, led by the lord of the manor. Some



mounted the horses that were awaiting them, the rest entered an open carriage with several seats. At the same moment, Aline's fresh young face appeared at one of the windows, and on the ground-floor the majestic visage of Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, who did not disdain to wish the huntsmen a good day's sport. Having courteously saluted the two ladies, the party left the château to the cheerful music of the hunting-horn sounding the departure.

The baron, sitting erect in his saddle in the martial attitude which was customary with him, his rifle slung across his shoulders and a cigar in his mouth, rode from one to another talking to each one in a jocosé strain that made it impossible for any one to suspect his secret thoughts. Although he had succeeded in composing his manner in a way to deceive the most searching eye, he could not entirely conceal the traces that violent passions leave upon the countenance; his face was much paler than usual, and his features showed the effects of two nights of suffering and insomnia. Gerfaut, too, had done his utmost to impress upon his countenance the impassive serenity which keeps the secret of the heart, but without marked success. His affectation of gaiety betrayed constant constraint; the smile that played about his lips left the rest of his face cold, and did not once smooth out the deep wrinkle between his eyebrows. An incident, sadly desired, it may be, but certainly unhoped for, deepened his anxious, melancholy expression. As the cavalcade rode by the English garden that separated the plane-tree avenue from the wing of the château occupied by Madame de Bergenheim, Octave drew in his horse and rode along slowly behind the others, casting an eager, dejected

glance at all the windows of that façade, one after another ; the bedroom blinds were only half-closed ; behind the opening he saw the curtains move, then separate. A pale face appeared for an instant, framed in their blue folds, as if an angel had put the curtains of the sky aside to look down upon the earth. Gerfaut stood in his stirrups in order to obtain a longer view of the vision, which a group of trees was beginning to conceal from him, but he dared not permit himself to make a single farewell gesture to her whom he saw doubtless for the last time. Again the trees thinned out, and he could distinguish Clémence's face once more, as she stood with her forehead resting against the window and her eyes fixed upon him ; then a clump of tulip-trees intercepted his view for the second time ; as he was on the point of riding back a short distance, to enjoy once more the melancholy pleasure of that last look, he saw riding beside him the baron, who had slackened his pace to wait for him.

"Play your part better," said he ; "we are surrounded by spies ; Camier has already commented on your preoccupied air."

"You are right," Octave replied ; "and you add example to precept. I admire your self-control, but I despair of attaining it."

"You must overtake them and talk with them," said Christian. "After the catastrophe, our slightest movements will be talked about if any one has any suspicion of the truth. Remember that that woman's honor depends on our prudence."

He urged his horse to a trot ; Gerfaut followed his example, stifling a sigh, and with one last glance in the direction of

the château. They soon overtook the wagon in which a number of the sportsmen were riding, driven by Monsieur de Camier, with the airs of a professional coachman.

"Good news, messieurs!" said Bergenheim, keeping his horse beside the vehicle. "The viscount undertakes to write a poem in honor of the man who kills the boar. Isn't it so, Gerfaut?"

"Certainly," was the reply, in the same tone; "and I have an idea that you will be the hero of it."

"*Parbleu!* you're quite capable of it, baron," said the old gentleman, putting up the collar of his hunting-jacket to protect his ears from a cutting north wind; "I would have been willing to bet that you wouldn't resist the temptation, and that this hunt would wring the neck of your Epinal trip."

"You're not very polite to-day," interposed the king's attorney, who was sitting at his left; "you don't consider that our host had a more powerful reason for hastening his return than all the boars in the Vosges."

"*Parbleu!* it would never occur to my mind to make the shadow of a comparison between Madame de Bergenheim and a wild boar," retorted Monsieur de Camier, who was little inclined to accept a lesson in courtesy from his neighbor; "I am too outspoken an adorer of our lovely baroness. You don't mind, Bergenheim; at my age, it's of no consequence. It's an undeniable fact that you have a pretty and attractive wife."

"Enchantress!" added the king's attorney, enthusiastically.

"Madame la Baronne is the pearl of our mountains," observed a dull-witted creature sitting on the second seat.

"And you can boast of being a lucky husband," continued the bulky Monsieur de Camier.

"I agree with you," Christian replied in a natural tone; "I am quite of your opinion."

"What a phenomenon!" cried Monsieur de Camier; "a husband satisfied with his lot. You were devilish lucky to succeed so well; for marriage is nothing but a lottery, after all, and winning numbers are a little scarce; a good wife is four prizes in one."

"An eel in a bag of snakes," replied the dull-witted man, with an air of compunction well adapted to convey the impression that he did not choose the eel, and that his snake had bitten him.

"Messieurs, you judge women too harshly," said Gerfaut, making an effort to join in the conversation.

"Bravo, viscount!" said Bergenheim, "I am very glad to find that you entertain such praiseworthy sentiments. We will marry you off one of these days, and then we shall find that your wife is four prizes in one."

Monsieur de Camier nudged his neighbor with his elbow.

"I would wager," he said in an undertone, "that our host has his eye on the viscount for Mademoiselle Aline. Do you see how he makes up to him. The little sister has a fortune of her own."

"And do you think he is rich?" asked the magistrate in the same tone.

"Hum! hum! I fancy he's a bit of a spendthrift like all these Parisian dandies. They say his works bring him in a good bit of money—nowadays these paper-scratchers are the

only ones who make a living. But the whole of their stuff isn't worth a good, solid estate, free of incumbrances."

"Certainly they seem to be on the best of terms," replied the king's attorney, as completely deceived as his neighbor by the comedy being played for their benefit by two men who were on the point of engaging in a fight to the death.

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the footsteps of the horses, and the rumbling of the wheels on the level avenue.

"What the devil are your dogs doing?" Monsieur de Camier suddenly exclaimed, turning to the baron, who was a step or two behind. "There they go, all of them, making a left wheel by fours for the river. Have you trained them to course pike?"

As he spoke, the dogs, who could be seen some distance ahead, rapidly nearing the Roche du Gué, rushed in a body toward the river, despite the efforts of the whipper-in to hold them back. Almost all of them disappeared behind the willows that bordered the bank, and soon they could hear them barking furiously in chorus, in a way that indicated rage not unmixed with fright.

"They must have started up a duck or a teal," observed the king's attorney.

"They wouldn't give tongue like that," said Monsieur de Camier, with the sagacity of a professional hunter; "if it were a wolf, they couldn't make a greater hullabaloo. Can it be that the boar has gone to take a bath, in order to receive us with more ceremony?"

He plied his whip vigorously; the cavaliers urged their steeds to a trot, and the party went rapidly forward toward

the point where something was taking place that aroused general interest. Before they had arrived, the whipper-in who had run after the pack in order to restore order among them, rushed out of the clump of willows and waved his hat to urge them forward, crying in a shrill voice:

“A body! a body!”

“A ten-branch stag!”<sup>s</sup> cried Monsieur de Camier, with sudden enthusiasm. He stood up at the risk of falling into the mud, and began to ply his whip with the full strength of his arm.—“A ten-branch stag in the water! Hurrah! hurrah!”

The horse, excited by a hailstorm of blows which threatened to flay him alive, broke into a gallop. The horsemen followed his example, and in a few moments they all reached the place where the servant was still shouting and gesticulating wildly.

“A body!—a man drowned!” he cried, when the carriage stopped.

This time, the king’s attorney rose and leaped down from the vehicle with the agility of a chamois.

“A man drowned!” said he; “let nobody touch it, in the name of the law!—Call off your dogs!”

With that, he hurried away to the spot indicated by the servant, with the characteristic ardor of officials in the department of justice, who in general rush forward at the mention of a crime as a soldier does at the sound of battle. Everybody alighted and made haste to follow him. At the whipper-in’s last words, Octave and Bergenheim exchanged a glance of singular meaning. The emotion of the latter was so keen

that he nearly fell as he dismounted, and it was some time before he could extricate his foot from the stirrup. At last, with a violent effort, he succeeded in overcoming his agitation and followed his companions with a calm, indifferent air.

At the lower extremity of a sort of crescent hollowed out of the bank by the current, stood a willow of considerable size, rounded at the top like an umbrella, half of its flexible branches being over the bank and half extending over the stream. The dogs had surrounded the tree and were barking madly at it; some of them had gone so far as to jump into the water, as a sort of strategic manœuvre, as if they had determined to try another method of attack; but as soon as one of them ventured to swim as far as the branches of the tree, he would at once beat a retreat, with every symptom of terror greater than his anger. The huntsman succeeded at last, by a lavish use of his whip, in keeping them at a distance. The sportsmen were thus enabled to approach and inspect the object that aroused the terror of the pack to such a pitch. It was, as the servant had said, the drowned body of a man; driven by the current against the trunk of the willow, there it had remained, the head caught between two branches on the surface of the water, as in a fork. The shoulders being aground on the sand, the whole upper part of the body was out of water, while the legs were afloat in deeper water and followed every undulation of the current, sometimes going to the bottom, sometimes floating on the surface.

"It's the joiner!" cried Monsieur de Camier, putting aside the foliage which prevented them from seeing the head



distinctly, and recognizing the mechanic's features, although they were livid and swollen. "Isn't it that poor devil of a Lambernier, Bergenheim?"

"Yes, it is!" faltered Christian, and, despite his firmness, he could not help turning his eyes away.

"The joiner!—drowned!—how horrible! I should never have known him—how disfigured he is!" cried all the others at once, pressing forward to look at the ghastly spectacle at closer quarters.

"A sad way of escaping punishment," observed the notary philosophically.

The baron, retaining, amid his superhuman efforts to conquer his emotion, the extraordinary clear-headedness which danger often inspires, eagerly seized this opening.

"He probably intended to cross the river and escape," he said; "in his excitement, he must have missed the ford and got drowned."

The king's attorney shook his head with a doubtful air.

"That is not probable," said he; "I know the neighborhood. If he had tried to cross the river a little above or a little below the ford, no matter which, the current would have carried him into the little bay above the rock, and not down here. It is clear that he must have drowned himself, or have been drowned lower down. I say: 'have been drowned,' for you will notice that he has a wound on the left side of the forehead, as if he had received a violent blow, or as if his head had come in contact with some hard body. If he had drowned himself accidentally, while trying to cross the river, he wouldn't be wounded in that way."

These observations, marked by the perspicacity with which familiarity with criminal prosecutions commonly endows the staff of the prosecuting attorney's office, reduced the baron to silence; while every one was exhausting his ingenuity in conjectures as to how the tragic event could have happened, and was taking sides for or against the theory of accident, he stood by, gazing vaguely at the river, and keeping his eyes turned away from the body, the sight of which froze the blood in his veins. Meanwhile, the king's attorney had produced from his game-bag a writing-case, pen, and paper, weapons of his profession which he always carried with him—a measure of precaution abundantly justified on the present occasion.

"Messieurs," said he, taking his seat upon a horizontal branch of the willow, opposite the body, "will two of you be kind enough to assist me as witnesses while I draw up my report. If any one has any statement to make relative to this event, I beg such person also to remain, so that I may take down his deposition."

No one stirred, but Gerfaut darted such a penetrating glance at the baron that he turned his eyes away.

"I entreat you, however, gentlemen," continued the magistrate, "not to abandon the pleasures of the chase on this account. There is nothing attractive about the spectacle, and I give you my word that I would be the first to turn my back on it if my duty did not detain me here. Baron, I beg you to send me two men and a litter to remove the body; I will have it carried to one of your farm-houses, in order to avoid terrifying the ladies."

“The king’s attorney is right,” said Christian, relieved by these words from most heart-rending anxiety ; from prudential motives, he would not have dared to propose a forward movement, and the torture he suffered beside the body of the man he had killed became momentarily more intolerable.—“Forward, messieurs ; this is really a ghastly sight ; the boars will help us to forget it.”

The hunters did not wait for a repetition of the invitation ; with the exception of two, who sacrificed themselves in obedience to the magistrate’s requisition, they remounted their horses or returned to the carriage. Soon the whole party were once more *en route* for Mares wood at a more rapid pace than before, for men, horses, and dogs seemed equally anxious to leave the scene of death. During the remainder of the ride, the conversation languished and showed the results of the painful emotion they had all experienced ; but when they arrived at the rendezvous, where the beaters were waiting, the report of the huntsman who had investigated the wood in the morning changed the course of their ideas. The wrinkles disappeared from thoughtful, dejected brows when they were assured by him that he had a boar within the charmed circle.

After a short deliberation presided over by Monsieur de Camier, whose pre-eminence in the science of venery the baron did not dream of disputing on this occasion, the beaters and the dogs set out to approach from the windward side the copse where the beast had taken cover. At the same time, the hunters went in the opposite direction to take their stations. They soon reached the trench, along which they were

to stand. As they walked along, one after another left the party, and stood motionless and mute, like a soldier on picket duty with the advance-guard. This manœuvre constantly reduced the number in the party until at last only three remained.

"Stop here, Camier," said the baron, when they were about sixty feet beyond the last man posted.

The old gentleman knew the ground, and was only moderately pleased by the suggestion.

"*Pardieu!*" he retorted quickly, "you are on your own property; you ought at least to do the honors of the grounds and let us select our places. You are all right; you want to station yourself at the edge of the wood, because that's where the beast always breaks through; but, *ventrebleu*, there will be two of us, for I propose to go there."

This declaration annoyed Christian beyond measure, for it threatened to wreck the plan he had arranged with such painstaking care.

"I want to give our friend Gerfaut that post," he said in the recalcitrant sportsman's ear; "I should be very glad to let him have a chance to fire. What difference does one boar more or less make to an old Egyptian like you?"

"All right! just as you please," replied Monsieur de Camier, dropping the butt of his gun on the ground, and he began to whistle to blow away his ill-humor.

When the two antagonists found themselves alone and side by side, the expression of Bergenheim's face suddenly changed; the jovial air he had just assumed to persuade the old hunter gave place to sombre gravity.

"You remember our agreements," he said, as they walked along; "it is safe to wager that the boar will come in our direction. At the proper moment, I will shout: '*Ware! oh!*' and await your fire; if, after twenty seconds, you have not fired, I warn you that I shall fire myself."

"Very well, monsieur," replied Gerfaut, looking narrowly at him; "doubtless you also remember my words. The discovery of the body should give them new weight. The king's attorney is beginning the investigation at this moment; remember that it is in my power to complete it. The statement I mentioned to you is in the hands of a trustworthy person, who is instructed to make use of it at need."

"Marillac, you mean, do you not?" replied Christian in a threatening tone; "he is your confidant. It is a fatal secret you have entrusted to him, monsieur. If I survive this day, I shall have to purchase his silence, too. May all this bloodshed, present and to come, recoil upon you!"

The lover hung his head without replying, secretly overwhelmed by the reproach.

"This is my place," said the baron, stopping at the oak stump he had mentioned, "and yonder, at the edge of the wood, is the elm by which you are to stand."

Gerfaut also stopped, and said in a voice that betrayed deep emotion:

"Monsieur, one of us will not go from this wood alive. With death staring him in the face, a man tells the truth. I hope, for your peace of mind and my own, that you will believe my last words: I swear to you, upon my honor and by all that is sacred in this world, that Madame de Bergenheim is innocent."

He bowed to Christian, and walked away without awaiting a reply. A moment later, he was standing motionless beside the elm that had been pointed out to him. All the hunters were at their posts. For some moments, the most profound silence reigned along the line of the trench and in the depths of the forest. The faint whistling of the wind among the leaves, the song of a linnet or two, and now and then the fall of a dry branch were the only sounds that could be heard. There is a keen, fascinating excitement in the moments immediately preceding the beginning of a hunt: every eye is eagerly searching the thickets, every ear listening attentively and not without anxiety; there is no heart that does not thrill at the first yelping of the dogs; the calmest man grasps his gun with a nervous hand, the most apathetic offers up prayers that the good fortune which is so glorious to the triumphant hunter, although armed with tusks which sometimes disembowel those upon whom it smiles, may fall to his lot. On this occasion, the onset produced its accustomed effect. An electric shock ran along the line of huntsmen the instant that the dogs began to give tongue in the distance. Every one cast a glance at his neighbor on each side, enjoining watchful vigilance, and cocked his gun in order to be ready to fire. Little by little, the barking became more distinct. The peasants who were beating the underbrush with their long switches, in order to start the boar, swelled the uproar with their savage yells. This general yelping came nearer every moment, and seemed to concentrate. It was evident that the cordon of beaters was closing in and imprisoning the boar in a constantly narrowing circle, which would soon leave him no other

## Chapter XXV

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*At the same moment, an enormous head protruded from the bushes and a report rang out. When Gerfaut, through the smoke that came from his rifle, looked toward the trench, it was empty, and he could see only the rustling foliage.*









resource than a descent upon the line of sportsmen, where the most profound silence still reigned.

Bergenheim and Gerfaut stood at their posts, out of sight of the other hunters, with their eyes fixed upon each other. The trench was sufficiently wide to prevent the branches of the trees from interfering with their view of each other ; at the distance of about sixty paces which separated them, each of them could see his adversary standing motionless, framed, as it were, by the foliage along the path, like a statue in a recess of verdure. Suddenly the baying of the pack was drowned by the report of a rifle near at hand. A few seconds later, two fainter reports were heard, followed by an imprecation from Monsieur de Camier, both of whose caps had exploded without result. The baron, who had stooped so that he could look into the underbrush better, rose and waved his hand to warn Octave to be ready. He then took the position of a corporal carrying arms: his body thrown back, his rifle in his right hand and turned outward, in such a way as to protect a perpendicular line, of the whole width of the two barrels, from the top of his head to the middle of his thigh.

Thereupon, Gerfaut's attitude betrayed extreme indecision. Having cocked his rifle, he laid it on the ground with a despairing gesture, as if he had suddenly abandoned the resolution to fire ; the pallor of death is not more ghastly than that which overspread his features. The howling of the dogs and the beaters came to his ears with constantly increasing force. Suddenly a noise of a different nature became mingled with it. A sharp and threatening grunting, followed by a great cracking of branches, came from the woods in front

of the two antagonists. The whole thicket seemed to sway to and fro as if a hurricane were blowing.

“Ware! oh!” cried Bergenheim in a firm voice.

At the same moment, an enormous head protruded from the bushes and a report rang out. When Gerfaut, through the smoke that came from his rifle, looked toward the trench, it was empty, and he could see only the rustling foliage. The boar, having passed through the circle, was off like a shot, leaving behind him a trail of broken branches, and Bergenheim lay behind the stump of the old oak, which was already wet with great drops of blood.

## XXVI

The picture-gallery that morning was the theatre of a peaceful domestic scene, much like the one we described at the beginning of this narrative. Mademoiselle de Corandeuil was sitting in her huge reclining-chair, reading the newspapers which had just arrived; Aline was practising on the piano, and her sister-in-law was embroidering at one of the windows. The tranquil demeanor of the three, and the interest each of them seemed to take in the occupation she had selected, were well calculated to lead one to believe that their hearts were equally at peace. Since she had left her bed, Madame de Bergenheim had in no way departed from her usual habits; her mouth found suitable words with which to reply when she was spoken to; her evident depression differed from her usual melancholy too slightly to occasion remark.

Her face shared the mysterious discretion of her manner and her conduct; its pallor was relieved and its beauty heightened by a noticeable flush; her eyes had never sparkled more brilliantly; but the hand that had ventured to question with a touch the forehead beneath which those eyes shone like two stars of ill omen, would at once have discovered in its burning flesh the explanation of her resplendent aspect. The brilliancy of her face was not the animation of vigorous life or of the freshness of youth; it was the rouge of passion with which the death-agony of young women sometimes bedecks itself, as if to obey the coquettish instincts of their sex to the end. In truth, Madame de Bergenheim was dying, there in that sumptuous salon, surrounded by her kinsfolk, and leaning over her embroidery with the most exquisite grace of manner. Fever, active as poison, was running through her veins and dissolving one after another all the foundations of existence. At the same time, she felt that her body was wasting away by slow degrees, and her heart straying through the roughest roads of bitter grief. Sorrows were heaped upon her heart like the waves of sand the simoon raises in the desert; each thought was more agonizing than the last, each vision more ghastly, each terror more awful. She knew that some frightful disaster was impending, and yet it was impossible for her to make any effort to avoid it. Grim despair chained her to the block of her scaffold more effectually than an executioner's hands could have done. With a refinement of torture unknown to ordinary executions, she was forced to await the blow with her eyes raised; she saw death before it became her portion, and stained herself with the blood on the axe which had not yet struck her down.



At that moment, either the man to whom she belonged or the man she loved was going to his death ; whatever form her widowhood might take, she knew that her period of mourning would be short ; young, beautiful as she was, and surrounded by all that rank and fortune can bestow, a wall was being built across her life, leaving open only a narrow pathway overflowing with blood : she must bathe her feet in that in order to pass beyond. That ghastly thing called a marriage of convenience had attained its most perfect development in her case. It is strange what fruit passion in revolt against the law sometimes engrafts upon that tree, sterile in itself : a corpse germinates in its flower. There is no woman who can avoid a shudder at the thought that a moment's weakness, an imprudent flirtation, an indiscretion, oftentimes not fully accomplished, may cause that horrible fruit to fall at her feet and spatter her robe, innocent though it may be. To be sure, all loveless unions do not lead to such catastrophes ; but no one of them is safe therefrom. The prejudice which makes the husband responsible for the faults of the woman who bears his name, digs a yawning ditch beside the nuptial bed ; and although there are husbands who are by no means anxious to make of that ditch a bath in which to wash their honor clean, others do not recoil from performing that ablution. A woman who reproaches herself for a momentary weakness only, arrives at murder as an infallible consequence : she believes that she is gliding over a bed of flowers ; it is on a death-bed that she falls.

Every woman who gives her hand without her heart, suspends that ever threatening fatality over her future. Woe to



her, then, if she does not succeed in silencing the heart she has disregarded! woe to her if, on entering the loveless sanctuary, she does not extinguish her heart as one blows out a light. The cloak wherein is enveloped the virtue of the woman who does not respect conjugal love is always combustible; a spark suffices to kindle it, and the wind is never lacking; and when it has taken fire, the whole existence is often consumed.

To dream, just as men commit murder, in the silence and solitude of the night; to stifle with your hand the beating of your heart, that no one may hear it; to dread the fever that burns the eyes and betrays the hidden grief; to dread even more the tears that redden them and that you must explain; to consume your sighs, your fears, your longings, your remorse,—that was all Clémence had known of love, and for that Fate had compelled her to drain the most horrible of chalices to its lowest dregs; the glass that Mademoiselle de Sombreuil drained had not that awful taste, for its contents did not come from the veins of a lover or a husband.

For some time, the three women had not spoken; the notes of the piano were the only sound to be heard in the salon; soon even that sound ceased. In her vexation at a passage she was trying for the tenth time, Aline suddenly rose and walked to the window at which her sister-in-law was sitting. The two young women had barely spoken to each other for several days. The girl, whose warm heart suffered under the constraint, was anxious for a reconciliation; but as Clémence did not seem inclined to take the initiative, she tried to find a pretext for entering into conversation with her. As she

leaned against the window, mechanically playing over on the glass the passage that had aroused her wrath, her eyes wandered vaguely over the wooded slopes on the other side of the river; and there she found at last the subject she was seeking.

"What a smoke over Montigny cliff!" she exclaimed in surprise; "I should think the ash woods were on fire."

Madame de Bergenheim raised her eyes, shuddered from head to foot as she spied the column of smoke standing out against the blue sky, and let her head fall upon her breast. Mademoiselle de Corandeuil paused in her reading, at Aline's words, and turned majestically toward the windows.

"It is the shepherds," she said; "they have kindled a fire in the underbrush at the risk of burning the forests. Really I cannot imagine what your husband is thinking of; he has taken everybody with him on this hunt, and has not left a single keeper to prevent the destruction of his estate."

Clémence made no reply, and her sister-in-law, who was waiting for her to speak in order to begin a conversation, returned, pouting, to the piano.

"Mercy for to-day!" cried the old maid at the first note; "you have been torturing us long enough. You would do much better to go and study your history of France."

Aline closed the piano in a pet; but, instead of following this last advice, she kept her seat on the piano-stool with the sulky face of a school-girl doing penance. Silence reigned for some moments. Madame de Bergenheim had let her embroidery fall without realizing it. From time to time, a trembling like a cold shiver shook her shoulders; her eyes followed,

with a sort of wildness in their glance, the column of smoke rising above the cliff of Montigny; or became fixed and haggard as she listened to some imaginary noise. Each time that she fell back upon her chair her body seemed to collapse more completely.

"Really," said Mademoiselle de Corandeuil suddenly, laying the paper across her knees, "since the Revolution of July, good morals are making wonderful progress. Yesterday a woman of twenty allowed her lover to carry her off at Montpellier, and to-day here's another one at Lyon, who poisons her husband and then suffocates herself. If I were superstitious, I should say the end of the world was coming. What do you think of such atrocities?"

Clémence raised her head with an effort.

"We must forgive her, as she is dead," she said in a hollow voice.

"You are very indulgent," retorted the old aunt; "such monsters ought to be burned alive, like La Brinvilliers."

"There is much more in the newspapers about husbands killing their wives than about wives killing their husbands," observed Aline, with the *esprit de corps* natural to the fair sex.

"It is not at all proper for you to talk about such horrors," interrupted Mademoiselle de Corandeuil severely; "that is the result of the morals of the age. All these infamous things that are found on the stage and in novels produce their due effect. When one thinks of the excellent education given to the young people of the present day, one may well shudder for the future."

"*Mon Dieu!* mademoiselle, you may be sure that I will never cause my husband's death," retorted the girl, for whom this last remark seemed more particularly intended.

A stifled groan which Madame de Bergenheim could not repress called the attention of both the others to her.

"What is the matter, pray?" demanded Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, noticing for the first time her niece's dejection and the wandering look in her eyes.

"Nothing——" she murmured; "it's the heat in the salon."

Aline made haste to open one of the windows, and took her sister-in-law's hands.

"You are feverish," said she; "your hands are burning hot, and so is your forehead; I didn't dare to tell you, but your lovely color——"

A frightful cry uttered by Madame de Bergenheim made the girl recoil in dismay.

"Clémence! Clémence!" cried Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, who thought that her niece was going mad.

"Did you not hear?" said she, with an accent of terror impossible to describe. She rushed suddenly toward the door of the salon; but, instead of opening it, she threw herself violently against it with her arms crossed above her head. Then she ran back, made the circuit of the room several times, and finally fell on her knees beside the couch, burying her head in the cushions.

This scene bewildered the other occupants of the room to the last degree. While the old maid was trying to induce Clémence to rise, Aline, even more terrified than she, rushed

from the room to summon help. A murmur of voices in the court-yard could be distinctly heard when the door was open. The next moment a piercing cry drowned the confused sound ; the young girl rushed into the salon, pale as death, and threw herself on her knees beside her sister-in-law, throwing her arms about her with convulsive energy.

When she felt the pressure of this embrace, Clémence raised her head, placed her hands upon Aline's shoulders to keep her at a distance, and gazed at her with eyes that seemed to devour her.

"Which? which?" said she in a harsh voice.

"My brother!—covered with blood!" faltered Aline.

Madame de Bergenheim pushed her violently away, and threw herself on the couch ; her first feeling was one of horrible joy when she did not hear Octave's name ; then she tried to suffocate herself by pressing over her mouth the cushion in which she had buried her face.

The sound of voices and footsteps was heard in the corridor ; the greatest confusion seemed to prevail among the persons who were approaching. At last, several gentlemen entered the salon, Monsieur de Camier at their head, his ordinarily ruddy face entirely devoid of color.

"Don't be alarmed, mesdames," said he in a deeply-moved voice ; "don't be alarmed. It's only a slight accident, not dangerous ; Monsieur de Bergenheim was wounded hunting," he continued in a lower tone, addressing Mademoiselle de Corandeuil ; "I don't know where to have him carried."

Before the old aunt could reply, the noise in the ante-chamber redoubled ; a moment later, several men appeared at

the door of the salon, bearing a burden which could not be distinguished.

"Not here! not here!" cried Monsieur de Camier, rushing to meet them to prevent them from coming in.

There was a moment's hesitation without. Several voices were speaking at once as if they were taking counsel as to what they should do. At last, notwithstanding the old gentleman's injunction, the door was thrown wide open. Two servants entered first, carrying the baron, stretched on a mattress. He seemed unconscious, if not altogether dead; his head followed every movement imparted to the litter by the bearers as they walked; his eyes were closed, his face very pale; the expression on his contracted features was stern and dolorous; to facilitate the application of bandages, they had taken off his coat, and his shirt and trousers were stained with blood. A large reddish spot was especially noticeable on the right side of the breast, which was bandaged with handkerchiefs torn in strips; under that place the mattress was drenched.

As the servants deposited their burden in front of one of the windows, Aline threw herself upon her brother's body with heart-rending shrieks. Madame de Bergenheim did not stir; half-lying on the couch, with her eyes and ears buried under the cushions, she was blind and deaf to everything about her. A convulsive trembling alone betrayed the presence of life in that body which sought to crush out its own life. Between that childish grief vented in sobs and that woman's despair verging on madness, and amid the consternation that had seized upon all the other spectators of this

scene, Mademoiselle de Corandeuil alone maintained some appearance of firmness and self-control. Mastering her real emotion, she leaned over the baron, and sought some indication of life upon his face.

"Is he dead?" she asked Monsieur de Camier in a low voice, clasping her hands with an air of stupefaction.

"No, mademoiselle," he replied in a voice that indicated how little hope he had.

"Have you sent for physicians?"

"To Remiremont, to Epinal, everywhere."

At that moment, Aline uttered a joyful cry. Bergenheim had moved, revived, perhaps, by the desperate embrace in which his sister's arms held him. His contracted features expressed poignant suffering. He half-opened his eyes and closed them several times; at last, his energy won the day over his suffering; he partly raised himself, leaning upon his left elbow, and glanced about with eyes that were already glazed, but still steadfast.

"My wife!" he said in a weak, gasping voice.

Madame de Bergenheim arose, walked through the group that surrounded the mattress, and took her stand in silence before her husband; her features were so discomposed that at sight of her a murmur of pity ran from one to another of the men who filled the salon.

"Take my sister away," said Christian, releasing his hand which the young girl was covering with kisses and tears.

"My brother! I don't want to leave my brother!" exclaimed Aline, who was finally dragged rather than led to her room.



"Leave me a moment," continued the baron ; "I wish to speak to my wife."

Mademoiselle de Corandeuil looked questioningly at Monsieur de Camier, to ascertain if he were of opinion that this request should be complied with.

"We can do nothing until the doctors arrive," said the old gentleman in an undertone, "and perhaps it would be imprudent to vex him."

Mademoiselle de Corandeuil, recognizing the justness of this observation, left the room, and requested all the others to follow her. During this general movement, Madame de Bergenheim remained, without moving, on the same spot, apparently insensible to everything that was taking place about her. The noise made by the door when it was closed roused her from her stupor. She glanced all around the salon, as if she were looking for those who were no longer there ; her eyes, wide open in the fixed stare of the somnambulist, hardly changed their expression when they rested on the mattress where her husband lay.

"Come nearer," he said in a weaker voice, "I haven't strength to speak loud."

She obeyed mechanically. When she saw, close at hand, the large spot of blood on Christian's shirt below the right arm, she closed her eyes and threw back her head, and all her features contracted with horror.

"You women have wonderfully sensitive feelings," said the baron, noticing this movement ; "you murder a heart by playing with it, but the least scratch terrifies you. Go round to the left side—you will see less blood ;—besides, it's the side where the heart is."

There was something positively awful at that moment in the ironical tone which he chose still to adopt. Clémence dropped on her knees beside him, and took his hand, crying in a choking voice :

“Pardon ! pardon ! ”

The dying man withdrew his hand, raised his wife's head, and looked intently at her for some moments.

“Your eyes are quite dry,” he said at last ; “no tears ! what, not a tear when you see me thus !——”

“I cannot weep,” she replied ; “I am dying ! ”

“That will be very humiliating for me—to be so little regretted—and it will do you little credit.—Try to find a few tears, madame.—It would be laughable !—a widow who can't weep.”

“Widow !—never ! ” said she, with gloomy emphasis.

“It would be very convenient if you could buy tears, like crepe, wouldn't it?—Ha ! ha ! you're the only woman in the world who hasn't that talent—all women know how to weep.”

“But you will not die, Christian.—Oh ! tell me that you won't die, and that you forgive me.”

“Your lover has killed me, sure enough,” replied Bergenheim slowly ; “I have a bullet in my chest that I will answer for—I moulded it myself.—Within an hour I shall die of suffocation. You can see already—how hard it is for me to talk——”

In truth, his voice became momentarily weaker and more painful to hear. At every word, his breath failed him ; a loud, hissing sound denoted a considerable lesion in the chest, and the progress of the internal hemorrhage.

"Mercy! pardon!" cried the wretched woman, beating her head against the floor.

"More air—open all the windows——" said the baron; and he fell back on the mattress, exhausted by the effort he had made in talking.

Madame de Bergenheim executed the order with the unintelligent precision of an automaton. A fresh, cool breeze entered the salon; when the curtains were raised, floods of light inundated the floor, and the old portraits, suddenly lighted up, seemed to come forth from their sombre frames as from a tomb to be present at the death-agony of the last of their race. Revived by the air which blew upon his face, and by the sunlight which gilded his bed of death, Christian raised himself once more. He glanced sadly at the radiant sky and the green foliage of the woods that rose in graceful terraces opposite the château.

"I lost my father on a day like this," said he, speaking to himself.—"In our family we always have fine weather to die in.—Ah! do you see that smoke over the cliff of Montigny?" he cried suddenly.

After opening the windows, Clémence had gone out upon the balcony. She leaned against the balustrade and gazed despairingly at the swift, deep river that flowed at her feet. Her husband's voice, calling her, roused her from that ominous contemplation. When she returned to Christian, his eyes were inflamed; a flush, like the flush of fever, had risen to his cheeks, and all his features were ablaze with indignation and intense excitement.

"You are looking at that smoke, are you?" he said vehemently; "it's your lover's signal—he is there—he is waiting

for you to carry you away.—And I, your husband, forbid you to go.—You must not leave me—your place is here—by my side.”

“By your side,” she repeated, with no idea what she was saying.

“Wait at least until I am dead,” he continued, his eyes gleaming brighter and brighter—“let my body get cold. When you are a widow, you can do what you please—you will be free—and even then I forbid you—— I want you to wear mourning for me—above all things, try to weep.”

“Strike me down with your knife—I shall bleed less——” said she, leaning toward him, and tearing away her dress so that her breast was uncovered.

He seized her arm, clung to it with all his strength to raise himself to her, and said in a voice whose sternness had changed to a sort of entreaty :

“Clémence, don’t dishonor me by giving yourself to him when I am dead.—I would curse you if I thought you would do that.”

“Oh! don’t curse me,” she cried; “you will drive me mad. Don’t you see that I am dying, too?”

“There are women who don’t see their husband’s blood—on their lover’s hands. There have been such women,—but I would curse you——”

He released her arm, and fell back upon the mattress with a sob. His eyes closed, and some unintelligible words expired on his lips, from which oozed a bloody foam; he was dying.

Madame de Bergenheim crouched on the floor, and repeated two or three times, imitating her husband’s stifled voice :

“I would curse you! I would curse you!”

She remained thus for some time, with her eyes fixed in stupid curiosity upon the body lying before her. Then she rose and ran to the mirror; she looked at herself a moment, in obedience to a mad caprice, and put aside the hair that covered her brow, the better to see herself. Suddenly a glimmer of reason returned; she uttered a blood-curdling shriek as she saw the blood on her face; she looked at herself from head to foot; her dress was spotted with it; she wrung her hands in horror and felt that they were wet with it. Her husband's blood was everywhere. At that, her agony and her despair fairly drove her mad. She rushed out on the balcony, and Bergenheim, before he expired, heard the splash of a heavy body falling into the water.

Some days later, the *Sentinelle des Vosges* contained the following paragraph, penned with the perfunctory desolation of death-notices at thirty sous a line:

“A terrible occurrence, which brings sorrow upon two families, has recently spread consternation throughout the arrondissement of Remiremont. Monsieur le Baron de B——, one of the wealthiest landed proprietors in the province, met his death in a most lamentable way while boar-hunting. He received the fatal bullet at the hands of one of his warmest friends, Monsieur de G——, so well known by numerous works which have won for their author a European reputation. The grief of the latter, the involuntary cause of this catastrophe, is said to be beyond expression. Upon learning of the tragic accident, Madame de B——, unable to survive the

death of the husband she adored, drowned herself in despair. Thus the same grave has opened to receive this happy couple in the prime of life, although their mutual affection seemed to give promise of a most happy future," etc.

A year and a half later, all the newspapers in Paris found space in their columns for the following article, with some slight variations :

" Words fail to describe the enthusiasm aroused last evening at the Théâtre-Français by the first performance of Monsieur de Gerfaut's new drama. This author, whose silence the world of letters has been compelled too long to deplore, has never risen so high. His departure for the Orient, which he has for several years intended to visit, is announced as soon to take place. Let us hope that this journey will redound to the benefit of art and of our enjoyment, and that the lovely, warm climes of Asia will prove a mine of renewed inspiration for the celebrated poet who has so gloriously established his claim to rank at the head of our literature——"

Bergenheim's last wish was gratified ; the honor of his marriage was unstained ; no one ever insulted with an incredulous smile the purity of Clémence's winding-sheet ; and society did not withhold from their double grave the empty consideration it accorded their existence. In the bloody *dénouement* of that social mockery called a marriage of convenience, the husband and wife were forced to undergo the doom attendant upon their respective positions ; the one died

a gladiator fighting for the prejudice that binds the husband's honor to the wife's frailty; the other, a victim of the moral code that makes of a young woman an article of merchandise, with a market price in which a single figure is forgotten—the heart! Both fulfilled their destiny.

Octave de Gerfaut is pursuing his destiny along the pathway of renown which men tread with illumined brow but bleeding feet; for fate always inflicts upon talent suffering that is its expiation. Most frequently the heart has to pay for the garlands about the head. Genius has ill-success in its affections; it brings woe to those it loves. Mirabeau, Byron, all men of bold mind and energetic soul, have exercised this lamentable power; all of them have returned grief for love, despair for devotion.—The halo is of the nature of the lightning-flash; it burns with its flame the imprudent wretch whom its splendor dazzles; happiness seldom grows in the furrow ploughed by these men who follow stars; in their eyes, women are a dream, a caprice, a passion perhaps, but never a goal. Glory is the goal; and they push forward to it, heedless of the angels they wound in their course and leave dying in despair by the roadside. Does the vessel, as it glides into the water, care for the garlands with which it is decked out from stem to stern? Down with the flowers! the sea is here! Doubtless the law is to be regretted that immerses talent in selfishness to make it carry further; it is the same law that requires the cannon-ball to be made of iron.

Clémence's death, then, did not wreck the life of the man who loved her; he left her grave upon his road, and set forth again; but the crepe he has worn since that day is of the sort



one never lays aside. And as the poet's heart is always reflected in his works, the world is witness of the mourning without understanding the mystery that lies behind it; when the bitter cup of memory overflows, the world thinks that a new vein has been opened in the writer's brain. Every day, Octave receives congratulations upon the melancholy chord, the latest development of his lyre, whose notes surpass in deathly sadness René's sighs and Obermann's reveries. No one knows that the bitter passages that arouse his admiration are written under the inspiration of a ghastly vision, and that the melancholy, sombre coloring, which he takes for a caprice of the imagination, has been mixed with blood and ground upon the heart.



MILITONA



One Monday during the month of June, 184—, a young man of good appearance, but seemingly in an ill-humor, directed his steps toward a house in Calle San Bernardo, in the most noble and very heroic city of Madrid.

The rippling notes of a piano sounded through the window of this house and sensibly increased the air of displeasure expressed in the young man's features; he halted before the door as if hesitating to enter; then, coming to a sudden determination and overcoming his repugnance, he raised the knocker, whose loud echoes brought a clumsy and heavy-footed *gallego* hurriedly down the stairs to open the door.

It might be supposed that some unpleasant business—a loan at a burdensome rate of interest to be secured, a debt to be discharged, or a lecture from some scolding relative to be endured—was responsible for the cloud that overshadowed the naturally cheerful face of Don Andres de Salcedo.

Nothing of the sort.

Don Andres de Salcedo, being out of debt, had no need to borrow money, and, all his kinsfolk being dead, he had no inheritance in view, and feared no reprimand on the part either of a crabbed aunt or of a crotchety uncle.

Although it may be little to the credit of his gallantry, it must be said that Don Andres was simply paying his customary daily visit to Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios.

Doña Feliciana was a daughter of a good family, rather pretty and quite rich, and Don Andres was shortly to become her husband.

Assuredly, this was not a cause to darken the brow of a young man of twenty-four, and the prospect of passing an hour or two with a *novia* "who counted no more than sixteen Aprils" ought not to appear terrifying to the imagination.

As an ill-humored fit does not exclude coquetry, Andres, who had thrown his cigar away at the foot of the staircase, as he went up brushed off the white ashes that soiled the facing of his coat, adjusted his locks, and gave an upward turn to his moustache; furthermore, he forced to his lips the sweetest smile he could command.

"If only," he said to himself, as he stepped into the apartment, "the idea does not enter her head of compelling me to join her again in that execrable duet from Bellini that requires to be taken up a score of times! I shall miss the opening of the fight and the alguazil's grimaces when the gate is opened to the bull."

This was the subject that preoccupied Don Andres, and, to tell the truth, his fears were amply justified.

Seated on a stool, and bending slightly forward, Feliciana was puzzling out the terrible score that lay open at the much-dreaded spot; with her fingers extended and her elbows at angles with her waist, she struck the chords and began anew a difficult passage with a perseverance that deserved a better cause.

She was so intent on her occupation that she did not perceive the entrance of Don Andres, whom the maid-servant had permitted to enter without announcing him, treating him as an intimate acquaintance at the house, and the future husband of her mistress.

The manila straw matting that covered the brick floor had deadened the sound of Don Andres's footsteps, so that he had reached the centre of the room without having attracted the young woman's attention.

While Doña Feliciana struggled with the piano, and Don Andres stood behind her hesitating between boldly interrupting the too familiar hubbub and disclosing his presence by a timely cough, it will not, perhaps, be out of place to take a glance at the surroundings of this scene.

The walls were distempered with a dull tint; sham mouldings and frames of a gray tone surrounded the windows and doors; a few engravings hung from the walls by green silk cord,—such subjects as *The Little Poachers*, *Don Juan and Haidee*, *Souvenirs and Regrets*, *Mina and Brenda*,—all brought from Paris. Sofas upholstered in black horse-hair, chairs similarly covered, with lyre-shaped backs, a desk and a mahogany table decorated with a sphinx with elegant tresses,—a souvenir of the conquest of Egypt,—a clock representing Esmeralda teaching her goat to write the name of Phoebus, and flanked by two candelabra under globes, completed the refined furnishing of the apartment.

Swiss muslin curtains with trailing flower patterns pretentiously draped and held up by all sorts of metal loops hung at the windows and reproduced with depressing exactness the



designs of the Parisian upholsterers published in the fashion journals and lithographed sheets.

It should, however, be said that these curtains roused general admiration and envy.

It would be unjust not to mention a number of small glass dogs, modern porcelain groups, filigree baskets ornamented with flowers in enamel, alabaster paper-weights, and brightly-colored Spa boxes, crowding the *étagères*: articles of luxury that established Felician's passionate interest in the arts.

Felician Vasquez had been educated according to French ideas and with the most profound respect for the fashions of the hour; at her wish, all the out-of-date furniture had been banished to the garret, to the great sorrow of her father, Geronimo Vasquez, a man of weak character although of good sense.

The ten-branched lustres, the quadruple-burner lamps, the Russia leather arm-chairs, the damask drapery, the Persian carpets, the Chinese screens, the clocks under shades, the chairs in red velvet, the marquetry cabinets, the black paintings of Orrente and Menendez, the huge beds, the massive walnut tables, the buffets with four doors, the closets with a dozen drawers, the immense flower-vases,—all the Spanish luxury of the past had to give place to that modern third-rate elegance that charms simple folks smitten with civilizing ideas, but which an English lady's-maid would not be willing to possess.

Doña Felician was dressed in the fashion that had reigned two years before; it need not be said that there was nothing Spanish in her toilet: she held in supreme contempt all that

was picturesque and characteristic, as became a *comme il faut* woman; her gown was of an undecided shade, and was overspread with almost invisible little clusters of flowers; the material had been brought from England and landed by daring Gibraltar smugglers; the most crabbed and pimpled *bourgeoise* would have chosen no other for her daughter. A pelerine trimmed with Valenciennes modestly veiled the furtive charms that, in obedience to the fashion-prints, the corsage allowed to be exposed. A narrow shoe closely hugged a foot which, by its smallness and flexibility, did not belie its owner's origin.

It was, moreover, the only indication of her race that Doña Feliciano preserved; but for it she might have been taken for a German or a French woman from the northern provinces; so far were her blue eyes, blond hair, and uniformly pink complexion from the ideal Spanish woman we picture after reading the romances and keepsakes. She never wore a mantilla, or carried the tiniest stiletto in her garter. The fandango and the cachuca were absolutely unknown to her, but she was more than skilled in the contra-dance, the rigadon, and the two-step waltz; she never attended bull-fights, as she considered this pastime "barbarous"; but, as a set-off, she was present at all first nights when Scribe's vaudevilles were played at the Teatro del Principe, and was an habitué at the Teatro del Circo when Italian operas were rendered. In the evenings, she drove along the Prado in her calèche, gloriously arrayed in a bonnet imported direct from Paris.

It will be seen that Doña Feliciano Vasquez de los Rios was in every particular a perfectly proper young person.

This was exactly what Don Andres said ; yet he dared not, even in his thoughts, formulate the complementary opinion :— perfectly proper, but altogether tiresome !

It may be asked why Don Andres sought with matrimonial views a woman who pleased him so indifferently. Was it from cupidity ? No, that could not be ; for, although Feliciana's dowry reached a good round sum, it offered no temptation to Andres de Salcedo, whose fortune was at least equal : the fact is, this marriage had been arranged by the young folks' parents, and the former had offered no opposition ; fortune, family, age, the ties of friendship,—a friendship contracted in childhood,—all favored the match. Andres had accustomed himself to regard Feliciana as his future wife, hence it seemed to him like entering his own house when he went to hers ; and what can a husband do in his own house, except to go out ? Besides, Feliciana enjoyed every necessary qualification ; she was pretty, slender, and fair ; she spoke French and English, and brewed excellent tea. True, Don Andres abhorred this detestable beverage. She danced, and, alas ! played on the piano, and made fairly good water-color drawings. Assuredly, the most exacting man could not have demanded more.

“ Ah ! it is you, Andres ! ” said Feliciana, without turning round, for she recognized the presence of her future husband by the creaking of his shoes.

Do not be surprised at a *demoiselle* so well bred as Feliciana addressing a young man by his baptismal name ; that is customary in Spain when an intimacy has existed for some time ; besides, the custom has not the same compromising and tender import that it has in France.

"You come at the nick of time ; I was just running over this duet once more, as we must sing it this evening at the Marquesa de Benavides's *tertulia*."

"I fancy I have caught a slight cold," Andres replied.

Now, in order to give color to this statement, he made an effort to cough ; but the cough did not carry the conviction of reality, and Doña Feliciana paid little heed to his excuse, remarking in a rather unfeeling tone :

"That will be nothing ; we certainly must sing it together once more to be quite sure of the effect. Will you take my place at the piano and be good enough to play the accompaniment ?"

The poor fellow cast a sorrowful glance at the time-piece ; it was already four o'clock ; he could not repress a sigh, and allowed his fingers to fall despairingly on the ivory keys.

The duet was finished without very much delay, and Andres looked once more at the clock, where Esmeralda was still teaching her goat, but his furtive glance was surprised by Feliciana.

"You seem to be much concerned about the time to-day, for your eyes never wander from the time-piece," she observed.

"Oh ! 'tis only an aimless, mechanical glance. What is time to me when I am beside you ?"

And he gallantly bent over Feliciana's hand to impress a respectful kiss thereon.

"I am certain that on the other days of the week the progress of the hands is quite indifferent to you ; but on Mondays it is altogether another matter."

"Why so, soul of my life? Doesn't time always fly equally rapid, particularly when one has the delight of singing with you?"

"Monday is the day of the bull-fight; and, dear Andres! do not seek to deny it, you would find it more agreeable to be at the Puerta d'Alcala at this moment than sitting here before my piano. Is your craving for that frightful sport ungovernable, then? Oh! when we are married, I shall know well enough how to restore you to more civilized and humane feelings."

"I had no actual intention to be present at it—yet I confess, if it does not annoy you, that I went yesterday to the Arroyo d'Abrunigal, and, among others, there were four bulls from Gaviria—magnificent beasts, with enormous dewlaps, clean, slender legs, and horns like crescents, and so wild and savage were they that they wounded one of the drivers. Oh! what fine fighting there will be on the Plaza directly, if the toreros have stout hearts and strong wrists!" cried Andres passionately, carried away by the enthusiasm of an *aficionado*.

Feliciano had assumed a highly disdainful mien during the delivery of this tirade, and she said to Andres:

"You will never be aught but a polished barbarian; you will upset my nerves with your descriptions of ferocious animals and your stories of disembowelings—and then you speak of these horrible matters with a joyful manner, as if they were the most lovely things in the world."

Poor Andres lowered his head; for, like all Spaniards, he had read the stupid, philanthropic tirades uttered by cowards and feeble souls against bull-baiting, one of the most noble sports that man is permitted to witness; and he was somewhat

tainted with the sentiments of a Roman of the decadent period, somewhat of a butcher, a wild-beast tamer, a cannibal; still, he would have joyfully given all the *douros* in his purse to any one who could enable him to make an honorable retreat and allow him to be present at the opening of the sports.

"Come, my dear Andres," said Feliciano, with a half-ironical smile, "I do not pretend to enter the lists against the mighty bulls from Gaviria; I do not wish to rob you of so great a pleasure: you are here in body, but your thoughts are at the Circo. Go; I will be merciful, and give you your freedom, on condition, however, that you appear in good time at the Marquesa de Benavides's."

From a delicacy of feeling that demonstrated his kindly nature, Andres would not at once take advantage of the permission granted by Feliciano; he talked for a few minutes longer, and went away leisurely, as if detained in spite of himself by the pleasure of the conversation.

He walked along at a slow pace till he passed the corner of the broad Calle San Bernardo to take his way through Calle de la Luna: then, feeling certain that he could not be seen from his fiancée's balcony, he increased his speed so that he might soon reach Calle del Desengaño.

A stranger would have been surprised on seeing every one going in the same direction, but no one coming from it. This phenomenon in the city's traffic was observable every Monday from four to five o'clock.

After a few minutes, Andres was near the fountain that marks the square formed by the intersection of Red de San-Luiz, Calle Fuencarral, and Calle Ortaleza. He approached it.

Calle del Caballero de Garcia crossed, he entered the superb Calle d'Alcala, which broadens as it approaches the gate of the city, just as a river, on approaching the sea, increases from the tributary streams entering it.

This fine street, which Paris and London might envy, and whose sloping course, lined by buildings of dazzling whiteness, ends in an azure vista, was, notwithstanding its immense width, thronged with a dense, variegated crowd, swarming in ever-increasing numbers.

Pedestrians, horsemen, and carriages were confusedly mixed, and blocked each other amid a cloud of dust, merry cries, and exclamations; the calaseros swore like demons; on all sides echoed the cudgel blows rained on the backs of sorry, restive steeds; the bells that hung in clusters at the heads of the mules gave forth a deafening tinkle; and the two sacramental Spanish phrases were bandied from one group to another like shuttlecocks.

At intervals, one could see in that human ocean, as if they were so many whales, coaches of the time of Philip IV. with tarnished gilding, faded colors, drawn by four antediluvian quadrupeds; chariots that had been exceedingly elegant in the days of Manuel Godoï, with their feeble springs yielding to the burden upon them, and more shamefully dilapidated than the public coaches in the environs of Paris now thrown out of use by the rivalry of the railroads.

On the other hand, as the representatives of modern times, omnibuses, drawn by six or eight mules kept at a fierce gallop by the cracking of whips, cut through the crowds that fell back terrified under the lopped and stunted trees that border



the Calle d'Alcala from the fountain of Cybele to the triumphal gate erected in honor of Charles III.

Never did post-chaise, at five francs a relay, in the days when the post travelled, fly at such a pace. The Madrilene omnibuses—and this explains their phenomenal speed—only run two hours a week, the one preceding the sports and the one after their termination: the necessity of making several trips in so short a time compels the drivers by dint of blows to get all possible speed out of their mules, and it is only just to them to say that the necessity does no violence to their inclinations.

Andres pushed forward with the quick and light step peculiar to Spaniards, who are the best walkers in the world, making his ticket *de sombra* (place in the shade) dance merrily in his pocket amid some douros and small change, and drew close to the gate; for, despising the elegant boxes, he preferred to lean against the ropes which are fixed to prevent the bull from leaping among the spectators, even though he should be elbowed by a peasant in a multicolored jacket and have his hair tainted with the smoke from a cigarette puffed by a *manolo*; for, in this position, not a single incident of the combat is lost, and every thrust can be justly appreciated.

Don Andres did not allow the fact of his coming marriage to prevent him from indulging in the pleasure of watching the pretty faces about him, more or less closely veiled by mantillas of lace, velvet, or taffeta. When some remarkably pretty woman passed with her open fan shading her face in the manner of a parasol to protect her fresh, delicately-tinted

complexion from the rude kisses of the sun's rays, he lengthened his stride, and turned round unaffectedly to regard leisurely the features that had been hidden from him.

On the present occasion, Don Andres made his observations with more than his accustomed care ; he allowed no seemingly pretty creature to pass him without casting on her his inquisitorial glance. It might have been supposed that he was seeking some one among the crowd.

A betrothed man ought not, morally speaking, to be conscious of the existence of any other woman in the world than his *novia* ; but such scrupulous fidelity rarely exists beyond the covers of a romance, and Don Andres, although he was not a descendant of Don Juan Tenorio or Don Juan de Marana, was not attracted to the Plaza de los Toros merely by the magnificent thrusts of Luca Blanco and the nephew of Montes.

On the previous Monday, he had caught a glimpse at the arena, on the benches of the *tendido*, of the face of an exquisitely lovely young girl whose features wore a most unusual expression. Her visage was outlined in his memory with extraordinary clearness in view of the momentary sight he had been able to obtain of it. It was only a chance meeting, which should have left no further impression than the recollection of a casually-seen painting, since not a word, not a sign of recognition, had been exchanged between Andres and the young *manola*,—for she appeared to belong to that class,—as they were separated from each other by several rows of seats, nor had Andres any grounds for believing that the young girl had noticed him or his admiring glances.

Her eyes had never wandered for an instant from the spectacle in the arena, which seemed to entirely absorb her interest.

This incident might, therefore, have been expected to vanish from his memory as he left the scene of its occurrence. Not so, however; for the image of the young girl had many times recurred to Andres's mind with more persistency and force than would appear to be justified.

Of an evening, unconsciously no doubt, he extended his walk, that was usually limited to the salon of the Prado, where the fashionables of Madrid display themselves on rows of chairs, to a point beyond the Fountain d'Alcachofa, along the shaded alleys frequented by the *manolas* of Plaza Lavapiés. A vague hope of again seeing his unknown led him to abandon his fashionable habits.

Moreover, he had remarked, and it was a significant symptom, that the fair locks of Feliciana assumed at eventide doubtful shades that cosmetics corrected only with great difficulty,—never, until this day, had he observed this,—and that her eyes, fringed with pale lashes, lacked other expression than that of the modest *ennui* which is so becoming to well-bred young girls; and as he thought of the sweets that Hymen had in store for him, he yawned involuntarily.

At the moment that Andres passed under one of the three arches of the Puerta d'Alcala, a *calesin* scattered the crowd amid a chorus of curses and hisses, for such is the reception accorded by the people in Spain to everything that disturbs them in the enjoyment of their pleasures and seems to attack the sovereign rights of pedestrians.

The appearance of this *calesin* was extravagantly gay, the body, set on two very large scarlet wheels, was almost hidden under a crowd of cupids and anacreontic emblems, such as lyres, tambourines, bagpipes, arrow-pierced hearts, billing doves, all drawn by a pencil more daring than truthful, and at periods now remote.

The mule, closely clipped to its middle, shook its plumed head and jingled a peal of little bells. The saddler who had made its harness had indulged in an incredible excess of passementerie, stitching, rosettes, tassels, and gewgaws of all colors.

At a distance, save for the long ears that stood out from this gorgeous medley, one might have taken this mule's head so decorated for a moving bunch of flowers.

A savage-looking *calasero* in shirt-sleeves, trimmed at the shoulders with astrakhan, seated sidewise on the shaft, belabored with the handle of his whip the bony rump of the animal, who bent to the blows and dashed forward with new fury.

A *calesin* on a Monday at the Puerta d'Alcala is not in itself deserving of special description, nor should it attract particular notice, but this one is so honored because on its appearance a look of most pleasant surprise overspread Don Andres's face.

It is not usual for a carriage to go empty to the Plaza de los Toros; and this *calesin* bore two persons.

The first was a little, fat, old woman, dressed in black, in antique style; her dress was too short by a few inches, and exposed to view the hem of a yellow cloth skirt such as Castilian peasant-women wear; this ancient creature belonged to

the class of women called in Spain *la tia Pelona*, *la tia Blasía*, according to their names, just as in France they say Mère Michel, Mère Godichon, in the sphere so well described by Paul de Kock.

Her face was large, flat, and purple, and would have been most ordinary save for two coal-black eyes surrounded by large brown circles, and a moustache ending in two fine points that shaded her lip, details that removed her from the category of commonplace women, and imparted a fierce and repellent expression worthy of a duenna of the good old times.

Goya, the inimitable author of the *Caprices*, would have engraved this countenance with two strokes of his needle. Although the age of love-adventures had taken wing long since in the case of this woman, if, indeed, it had ever existed, she did not lack a certain amount of coquetry in the way in which she posed her elbows within her mantilla of serge bordered with velvet, and in the pretentious manner in which she handled a huge green paper fan.

It was very unlikely that it was the sight of this amiable crony that brought a look of satisfaction to Don Andres's face.

The second person was a young girl of from sixteen to eighteen years old, more likely the former; a light taffeta mantilla rested upon the rim of a high tortoise-shell comb that encircled a heavy tress of closely-plaited hair and framed a charming face whose paleness was tinged with an almost imperceptible olive hue. Her foot, hardly exceeding in size a Chinese woman's, was resting on the front of the *calesin*,

and disclosed a dainty satin slipper, the quarter made of ribbon, and the lower part of a silk stocking with colored clocks, and admirably fitting. One of her slender and finely-shaped, though slightly tanned, hands toyed with the two points of her mantilla, while the other rested on a cambric handkerchief in such a way as to allow some silver rings to sparkle, the richest treasures of a *manola's* casket; jet buttons shone on her sleeves and completed this essentially Spanish costume.

Andres had already recognized the charming face whose memory had haunted him for a week.

He doubled his pace, and arrived at the entrance to the Plaza de los Toros at the same time as the *calesin*; the *calasero* was already kneeling so as to furnish a sort of step for the lovely *manola*, who, in alighting, rested the tips of her fingers on the man's shoulder; the descent of the old woman was effected with much more difficulty, but it was happily completed at last, and the two women, followed by Andres, found themselves struggling up the wooden staircase leading to the tiers of seats.

As if Chance had willed to pay a genteel compliment, the tickets had been so distributed that Andres found himself seated close beside the young *manola*.

## II

While the public was noisily invading the plaza, and the vast circle of benches grew darker as the crowd became denser, the toreadors entered in succession through a door

at the rear into the place which served them as a *foyer*, and where they awaited the hour of the *funcion*.

This was a large whitewashed hall, dreary-looking and bare. A few wax tapers shimmered like dull, yellow stars before a smoky image of The Virgin hanging on the wall; for, like all persons exposed by their callings to the peril of death, the toreadors are devout, or, at any rate, superstitious; each wears an amulet in which he fully trusts; certain omens depress or embolden them; they know, so they say, the encounter that will be fatal to them. A taper presented and burned opportunely may, however, turn aside fate and prevent the danger. On that day, there had been a dozen tapers lighted, which fact proved the justness of the remark made by Don Andres as to the strength and savage nature of the bulls of Gaviria that he had seen the evening before at the Arroyo, and whose qualities he had so enthusiastically described to Feliciano, who but indifferently appreciated their merits.

About a dozen toreadors, chulos, banderillos, and espadas, wearing glazed percaline capes, entered. In passing in front of the Madonna, each of them bowed his head with more or less marked respect. This duty over, they walked to a table and took therefrom *la copa de fuego*,—a small cup with a wooden handle and filled with charcoal, placed there for the convenience of smokers of cigarettes and *puros*,—and began to discharge whiffs of smoke as they walked about, or settled themselves on the wooden seats arranged along the walls.

Only one man passed before the venerated picture without deigning to show the customary mark of respect, and he seated himself apart, crossing his firm and sinewy legs, which



in his lustrous silk stockings might almost be taken for marble limbs. His thumb and index finger were as yellow as gold and protruded from the opening of his cloak while firmly holding the end of a *papelito* already three-quarters consumed. The fire was so close to the skin that it would have burned more tender fingers; but the toreador paid no heed thereto, occupied as he seemingly was with some engrossing thought.

He was a man of from twenty-five to twenty-eight. His tanned features, jet-black eyes, and curly hair indicated his Andalusian origin. He must be from Seville, earth's most beautiful spot, the natural home of valiant fellows, well built and sturdy, of guitar-strummers, horse-breakers, picadors, experts with the *navaja*, and of men of iron arm and ready hand.

It would have been difficult to discover a more robust frame or better-set limbs. His vigor was so proportioned that any increase would have been clumsiness. He was equally well built for wrestling as for running, and if it could be presumed that nature had expressly designed a race of toreadors, a better model than this well-proportioned, active Hercules could not have been created.

Through his half-opened cloak the spangles of his red-and-silver jacket glistened in the shadow, as did the setting of the *sortija* that fastened the ends of his cravat; the stone of this ring was of considerable value, and indicated, like the rest of his costume, that the wearer was one of the aristocrats of his profession. His *mono* of new ribbons, tied to a lock of hair expressly reserved for it, fell over the back of his neck in an

abundant cluster; his *montera* of the finest black cloth was loaded with silk trimmings of the same color, and was knotted beneath his chin by straps that had not been worn before; his shoes, of exceptional smallness, would have been an honor to the most skilful Parisian shoemaker, and might have done duty for a danseuse at the Opéra.

Juancho, however, for so was he named, had not the open, frank mien that becomes a fine, splendidly-dressed young man who is about to attract the applause of women: was it that fear of the coming combat disturbed his serenity? The perils encountered by combatants in the arena, which are much less serious than is generally supposed, should have had no terrors for a fine blade like Juancho. Had he seen in a dream some infernal bull bearing on his reddened horns of steel a spitted matador?

Nothing of the kind! It was Juancho's customary demeanor, especially for the last year; and although he was not exactly on bad terms with his comrades, there was an absence between him and them of that heedless and jovial familiarity that is usual among people that run the same risks; he did not repel their advances, but he never made overtures to them; although an Andalusian, he was wilfully taciturn. At times, he seemed to desire to throw off his melancholy, and abandoned himself to impulsive bursts of fictitious enjoyment. He drank immoderately, he who was ordinarily very abstemious, rioted in cabarets, danced demon-like cachucas, and ended by senseless broils which soon brought the flashing poniard into play; the frenzy over, he relapsed again into his taciturn and dreamy state.

Divers subjects of conversation engaged the groups: love, politics, and, above all, bulls were in question.

"What is your Grace's opinion of the black bull of Mazpule?" one of the toreadors asked a comrade, with all the ceremonious formality of the Spanish tongue. "Is he near-sighted, as Arjona claims?"

"He is near-sighted in one eye, and far-sighted in the other; it won't do to trust him."

"And Lizaso's bull, you know him, the black and white one, with which horn does he attack?"

"I can't say, I haven't seen him in action; what do you say, Juancho?"

"With the right," he replied, as if rousing from a dream, and without looking at the young man standing in front of him.

"Why?"

"Because he is incessantly twitching his right ear, which is an unmistakable sign."

With this, Juancho put the end of his *papelito* between his lips, and it disappeared in a pinch of white ash.

The hour for the opening of the events drew near; all the toreadors, except Juancho, had risen to their feet; the conversation slackened, and one could hear only the dull thud of the lances which the picadors struck against the wall of an interior court-yard for practice and to try their horses. Those who had not finished their cigarettes threw them away, the *chulos* affectedly arranged the folds of their brilliantly-colored capes over their forearms and formed in rank. Silence reigned, for the moment of entering the arena is always a rather solemn one that sobers even the most light-hearted.

At length, Juancho rose, threw his cloak on the bench, where it lay in a heap, took his sword and his *muleta*, and joined the motley group.

Every cloud had now vanished from his brow. His eyes sparkled, and his nostrils dilated and vigorously inhaled the air.

A strangely audacious expression gave animation to his proud features. He strutted and drew himself up as if in preparation for the coming struggle. His heel rested firmly on the ground, and under the silken mesh that encased his foot the muscles of his instep quivered like the strings of a guitar. He put his sinews in play, and assured himself of their sufficiency for his work, just as a soldier before the battle tries his sword within its scabbard.

Juancho was certainly a fine fellow, and his costume showed him off marvellously: a large, red silk *faja* encircled his fine waist; the silver-lace trimmings that adorned his jacket were united at the collar, sleeves, pockets, and facings, and there the arabesque-like tracery became so intricate and heavy that the material of his jacket was almost hidden. It was hardly a red jacket silver-embroidered, but a silver jacket embroidered with red. So much fringe, filigree-work, so many beads, bows, and ornaments of all kinds glistened at his shoulders, that his arms seemed to spring from two hollow crowns. His satin breeches, decorated with braid and span-gles at the seams, clung closely to his iron muscles and elegantly robust form without confining them. This costume was the masterpiece of Zapata of Granada,—Zapata, that Cardillac of the *majo's* costume who weeps each time he takes

you a coat, and offers more money to get it back again than he asks you for making it. Connoisseurs do not consider ten thousand reals too high a price to pay for one, but worn by Juancho it was worth twenty thousand!

The last flourish of trumpets had sounded; the arena was cleared of dogs and boys. The supreme moment had come. The picadors, covering the right eye of their horses with a handkerchief to prevent them from seeing the approach of the bull, joined the procession, and the troop entered the square in good order.

A murmur of applause welcomed Juancho when he knelt in front of the queen's box; he bent his knee so gracefully and with an air at once humble and proud, and rose with such supple grace, without effort as without abruptness, that the ancient habitués themselves said: "Neither Pépé Illo, nor Romero, nor José Candido ever acquitted himself better."

The alguazil on horseback, in the familiar black habiliments of the Santa Hermandad, went, as usual, amid the general shouting, to hand the key of the *toril* to the attendant, and, having accomplished this formal duty, started off at as rapid a gallop as possible, shaking in his saddle, losing his stirrups, and clinging to the neck of his horse, thus affording the populace that comedy of terror that is always an amusement to the spectators who are well out of danger.

Delighted at the meeting he had obtained, Andres gave but little heed to the preliminary events of the arena; in fact, he had not cast even a single glance therein until the bull had disembowelled one horse.

He gazed so earnestly at the young girl beside him that she must have been greatly embarrassed had she observed it. She seemed to him to be more attractive now than when he saw her for the first time. The ideal picture which insinuates itself into the memory and is often followed by disillusionment when one is in the presence of the subject of one's dream, could add nothing to the beauty of the fair unknown; it must be admitted that no more perfect type than the Spanish woman had ever sat on the blue granite steps of the Madrid circus.

The young man was in ecstasy as he admired the clearly-cut outline of her face, her fine and proud nose with its nostrils as pink as the interior of a shell, her full, amber-tinted temples in which the blue veins faintly appeared like lacework, her mouth fresh as a flower and luscious as some delicious fruit, parted by a half-smile and set off by teeth that flashed like pearls, and, above all, her eyes, whose glances burst forth in irresistible floods from between thick black lashes.

Hers was all the purity of the Grecian type of beauty, but enhanced by the characteristics of the Arabs, the same perfection, but more savage in tone, the same grace, but more pitiless; her eyebrows formed an ebon arch upon a marble brow shaded with a golden tint, as if done by some daring pencil; the pupil of her eye was of such a deep black, and so intense was the color of her lips, that such a beauty would have created alarm in a salon in London or Paris; but under the ardent sun of Spain, occupying a seat in the amphitheatre of a bull-ring, it was entirely in place.

The old woman, who did not observe the incidents of the arena with the same attention as the young one, watched Andres's conduct with a sidelong glance and with the air of a dog scenting a thief. In a merry mood, the woman's countenance was ugly; when she scowled, it was repulsive; her wrinkles appeared to grow deeper, and the dark circles about her eyes seemed larger and vaguely suggested the ring of feathers encircling the eyes of an owl; her teeth, like those of a wild boar, pressed her callous lips more tightly, and nervous twitches contracted her grinning face.

As Andres continued his observation, the silent anger of the old hag increased from moment to moment; she shifted restlessly on her seat, made her fan whistle, nudged her lovely neighbor's elbow frequently, and asked her all kinds of questions in order to compel her to turn her head toward her, but whether it were that the latter did not or would not understand, she merely replied in two or three words and resumed her serious and attentive air.

"Plague take the vile sorceress!" muttered Andres; "what a pity that the Inquisition has been abolished! With such a face, you would have been paraded astride an ass, wearing a san-benito and a sulphur shift, without giving you a hearing; for you certainly come from the school of Barahona, and should prepare young girls for the witches' dance."

Juancho, whose turn to slaughter had not yet arrived, stood disdainfully in the centre of the arena, paying no more heed to the bulls than if they were sheep; and he hardly made a movement of his body or shifted his position, when the



furious beast, intently watching the man, looked as if he would rush upon him.

His fine, lustrous black eyes glanced around the boxes, the galleries, and the tiers, where a swarm of fans of all hues were fluttering like the wings of butterflies; he looked as if he were seeking some acquaintance among the onlookers. When his glance in its circular sweep fell upon the tier where the young girl and the old woman were seated, a flash of joy lighted up his dark face, and he moved his head almost imperceptibly in token of recognition, as actors sometimes do from the stage.

"Militona," whispered the old woman, "Juancho sees us; take care how you act; this young man is looking tenderly at you, and Juancho is jealous."

"What has that to do with me?" replied Militona in a whisper.

"You know he is the man to make any one who displeases him swallow an ox tongue."

"I have not looked at that gentleman; besides, am I not my own mistress?"

In saying that she had not looked at Andres, Militona was guilty of a trifling falsehood. She had not looked directly at him: women have no need to do so in order to see, yet she could have given a minute description of his appearance.

As a truthful story-teller, we are bound to say that she thought Don Andres de Salcedo just what he was,—a very handsome gentleman.

Andres, in order to secure an opportunity of entering into conversation, beckoned to one of the vendors of oranges, preserved fruits, pastilles, and other sweetmeats, who pass

through the corridors of the arena and offer the spectators whom they suspect of gallant attentions their sweetmeats and sugar-plums at the point of a rod. Andres's fair neighbor was so pretty that one of the dealers stood near, in the hope of a forced sale.

"Señorita, would you like some of those pastilles?" asked Andres, smiling pleasantly at his lovely neighbor, at the same time offering her the open box.

The young woman turned with a look of troubled surprise.

"They are citron and mint flavored," he added, in order to induce her.

Militona at once assented, and plunged her slender fingers into the box and took out a few of the pastilles.

"Luckily, Juancho's back is turned," growled a man of the people, who was close at hand; "otherwise, there would be blood spilled this evening."

"Does madame desire some?" continued Andres, in an exquisitely polite tone, offering the box to the horrible old woman, whom this audacious stroke had so disconcerted that in her agitation she took the whole of the pastilles.

Nevertheless, as she emptied the contents of the box into the hollow of her hand, which was as dark as that of a mummy, she cast a frightened and furtive glance over the arena and heaved a deep sigh.

At that moment, the orchestra sounded the mort; Juancho's turn had arrived to commence the deadly combat. He walked toward the *ayuntamiento's* box, made the customary salute and request, and then, with the most swaggering and affected air, threw his *montera* in the air.

Silence at once fell upon the assemblage, usually so uproarious; every bosom was oppressed with anxious expectation.

The bull that Juancho was to kill was one of the most dreaded beasts; we must crave pardon for having omitted to narrate the details of his might, but we have been occupied with the consideration of Andres and Militona: seven horses lay stretched on the sand where they fell, disembowelled and gashed, in the death-agony, the slender outlines of their carcasses bearing telling witness to the strength and rage of their enemy. The two picadors had retired, bruised by their fall and almost crippled, and the *sobresaliente* (substitute) waited in the corridor, mounted and with lance in hand, ready to replace the head assistants who were rendered unfit for further service.

The *chulos* prudently remained near the palisade, their feet placed on the wooden steps which enable them to leap over it in case of peril; while the victorious bull wandered freely about the arena, stained here and there with large pools of blood that the attendants dared not go near to cover with dust, striking the doors with his horns and tossing in the air the dead horses that were in his path.

"Indulge in your haughty airs, my boy," said an *aficionado* of the common people, addressing the ferocious beast; "enjoy your breathing-spell, leap, gambol, you will not be quite so lively presently: Juancho will quiet you."

In truth, Juancho was marching toward the huge animal with the firm and deliberate step that makes even lions recoil.

The bull, astonished to see another adversary, stopped, uttered a low roar, shook the foam from his muzzle, pawed

the ground, lowered his head twice or thrice, and drew back a few paces.

Juancho was superb to see: his face expressed unwavering resolution; his fixed eyes, whose pupils shone like stars of jet set in the white, flashed rays that pierced the bull, as it were, with steel darts; unwittingly he seemed to bring him under that magnetic glance with which the wild-beast tamer Van Amberg sent the trembling tigers squatting cowering in the corners of their cages.

For every step forward taken by the man, the savage beast made a backward one.

At this triumph of moral over brute force, the people, impelled by enthusiasm, broke forth in frantic transports; applause, cries, and the stamping of feet drowned the voices; the amateurs shook with all their might the little bells and tam-tams that they take with them on these occasions to create the greatest noise possible. The ceilings seemed to crack with the clamor of admiration rising from the upper rows of seats, and the paint fell in fluttering clouds of whitish films.

The acclaimed *torero*, with flashing eyes and joyous heart, raised his head toward the spot where Militona was seated, as if to accord to her, in token of homage, all the bravos that had been shouted to him.

The moment was ill-timed. Militona had dropped her fan, and Don Andres, who had hastened to pick it up, only too eager, like every man, to take advantage of the least incident to add another strand to the frail cord of a new liaison, handed it to her with a gratified expression and with a most gallant air.

The young girl could not refrain from thanking Andres with a pretty smile and a gracious inclination of the head for his polite attention.

This smile was observed by Juancho ; his lips turned white, his face assumed a greenish tint, his eyeballs became inflamed, his hand clutched the sleeve of his *muleta*, and with the point of his sword, which he held downward, he cut three or four holes in the sand with a convulsive movement.

The bull, no longer daunted by the fascinating glance of his antagonist, drew nearer to him, without the latter thinking of placing himself on guard. The distance which separated man and beast was terrifyingly diminishing.

“There’s a fine fellow who doesn’t get alarmed,” said some who were not given to emotion.

“Juancho, take care,” said others who were more humane ;  
“Juancho of my life, my heart, my soul, the bull is almost on you ! ”

Militona’s face remained calm and serene, as if nothing were taking place, whether because she was habituated to the scenes of the arena, or that she enjoyed complete confidence in Juancho’s supreme skill, or that she took only a slight interest in him whom she moved so profoundly ; only a slight flush mantled her cheeks, and the throbbing of her bosom slightly accelerated the rise and fall of the lace of her mantilla.

The cries of the attendants roused Juancho from his torpor ; he drew his body back quickly, and waved the scarlet folds of his *muleta* in front of the bull’s eyes.

The instinct of self-preservation and the spirit of the gladiator battled in Juancho’s soul with the desire to watch

Militona's actions ; a wandering glance, a moment's forgetfulness, might imperil his life at this supreme moment. Infernal situation ! to be jealous, to see beside the loved one a charming, attentive young man ; to be at the same time in the centre of the arena under the eager glances of twelve thousand spectators, and to have within two inches of one's breast the fiery horns of a savage beast that one must not kill except in a certain spot and in a particular way, at the risk of dishonoring one's self.

The *torero*, once more master of the *jurisdiccion*, as it is styled in tauromachic slang, stood firmly on his heel and made several passes with his *muleta* to compel the brute to lower his head.

"What could that young man have said to her, that rascal on whom she smiled so pleasantly?" thought Juancho, forgetting that he had a terrible adversary before him ; and he raised his eyes involuntarily.

The bull, profiting by this distraction, rushed on the man ; the latter, taken unawares, leaped back, and by an almost mechanical movement made a chance thrust ; the steel penetrated a few inches ; but, entering at an unfavorable spot, struck a bone, and was shaken off by the furious beast, and fell some paces away, while a stream of blood gushed from the wounded part. Juancho was disarmed, and the bull was full of mettle, for this ineffectual thrust had only exasperated him. The *chulos* ran to the spot waving their red and blue cloaks.

Militona had become somewhat pale, the old woman discharged a volley of "Ohs !" and "Alases !" and groaned like a stranded whale.

The public, at sight of Juancho's unaccountable clumsiness, gave way to an outburst of exultant uproar such as Spaniards excel in: it was a veritable tempest of insulting epithets, vociferations, and maledictions. "*Fuera, fuera,*" was the cry from all parts, "the dog, the thief, the assassin! To the penitentiary! To Ceuta! To spoil such a fine beast! Clumsy butcher! Cruel bungler!" and everything that could be suggested on such an occasion by southern exuberance, which is invariably carried to extremes.

Juancho, however, stood still in face of this deluge of insults, biting his lips, and tearing the lace of his frill with his disengaged hand. His sleeve, that had been slashed open by the bull's horn, disclosed a purple streak on his arm. For a moment he tottered, and it appeared as if he were about to fall, choked by emotion; but he recovered himself quickly, ran to his sword, as if he had suddenly determined on some course, picked it up, drew it beneath his foot to straighten the blade, and placed himself so as to have his back toward the spot occupied by Militona.

He signalled, and the *chulos* enticed the bull toward him by means of their cloaks; this time, Juancho, whose mind was not diverted from his occupation, dealt him a downward thrust in the most approved fashion of the sport, of which even the great Montès de Chiclana would not have been ashamed.

The sword was planted between the shoulders, and with the hilt rising between the horns of the beast looked like a cross, and recalled the Gothic prints depicting Saint Hubert kneeling before a stag bearing a crucifix on its antlers.



The animal fell heavily on its knees in front of Juancho, as if to render homage to his superiority, and, after a slight convulsive movement, rolled over on its back with its hoofs high in the air.

"Juancho has brilliantly avenged himself! What a glorious thrust! I prefer him to Arjona or Chiclana; what is your opinion, señorita?" Andres asked his fair neighbor enthusiastically.

"For God's sake, señor, don't speak a single word to me," replied Militona hurriedly, without moving her lips or turning her head.

The tone in which these words were uttered was at once so imperative and supplicating that Andres saw plainly that it was not the "Have done!" of a lass who is dying with longing to have a man continue his attentions.

It was not the bashfulness of the young girl that dictated those words; the attempted conversation on the part of Andres in no way merited such strictness; moreover, the *manolas* are the *grisettes* of Madrid, and, without any desire to speak ill of them, they are not generally afflicted with such shy susceptibility.

Genuine terror, the feeling of a danger that Andres could not comprehend, thrilled in that brief sentence, uttered so abruptly and in an aside so that it appeared of itself an added peril.

"Could she be a princess in disguise?" Andres thought, puzzled and uncertain as to the course he should adopt. "If I keep silent, I shall look like a fool, or at the very least a third-rate Don Juan; if I persist, it may well be that I shall involve this beautiful girl in some serious trouble. Can she be in

dread of the duenna? No; for, as that amiable old wanton has eaten all my pastilles, she is in some degree an accomplice, and, therefore, it cannot be that my infanta stands in awe of her. Can there be a father, a brother, a husband, or a jealous lover about?"

But there was no one near Militona who could be included in this category; they all presented too indifferent an air and faces too void of interest; evidently, then, they were in no way connected with the lovely *manola*.

Juancho never directed a single glance in the direction of the spectators until the close of the fête, when with almost unequalled masterful skill he had dispatched the two bulls that were brought to him; he was applauded as wildly as previously he had been loudly hissed.

Whether Andres deemed it prudent not to resume the conversation after listening to that remark so punctuated with alarm, and so suppliant withal, or whether he could find no lucky opening for its renewal, the fact remains that he did not speak another word to Militona; in fact, he left his seat some minutes before the close of the sport.

As he leaped over the tiers in leaving the place, he addressed a few whispered words to an intelligent, bright-looking boy and disappeared.

The little rascal mixed with the crowd as they went out, taking care to follow close behind Militona and the duenna, but without betraying the slightest interest in them—indeed, appearing most unconcerned. He allowed them to get into their chaise; then, as if yielding to a gamin's impulse, as the vehicle swayed to and fro on its high red wheels, he hung on

to the body of it with hands and feet, and sung at the top of his voice the popular air of the *Bulls of Puerto*.

The carriage disappeared in a cloud of dust and amid a confused rattle.

"Good!" thought Andres, who had already reached one of the alleys of the Prado, from which he saw the chaise pass rapidly by with the boy hanging behind, "I shall learn the address of that charming being this evening, and Bellini's duet will sit lightly on me!"

### III

The lad was to report the result of his mission to Don Andres, who was smoking a cigar while waiting for him in an alley on the Prado, in the vicinity of the monument erected to the victims of the Second of May.

He vigorously puffed at his cigar, and as the blue wreaths of smoke rose in spiral clouds, Andres meditatively examined his conscience: he could hardly persuade himself that, if he were not in love with the lovely *manola*, he was at least very keenly interested in her. Although the young girl's beauty might not have set the least inflammable heart on fire, the sort of mystery that seemed to find voice in her terror when Andres spoke to her after the mishap that happened to Juancho could not fail to pique the curiosity of any young man, however little inclined to adventure he might be: at twenty-five, without being a Don Quixote, one is always ready to champion princesses whom one conceives to be oppressed.

What had become of Feliciana, the well-bred young person, during all this? This subject was rather embarrassing to Andres; but he said to himself that his marriage to her was not to take place until six months later, that this trifling love-affair could be consummated, broken off, and forgotten before that fatal period, and that, inasmuch as Feliciana and the young girl moved in spheres so different that they would never meet, an intrigue of this kind was, therefore, easily concealed. It should be his last bachelor folly; for, in society, to love a graceful, charming young girl is called folly, while to marry an ugly, crabbed woman who is distasteful to one is voted an act of reason; after that, he would live a hermit's life, be a sage, a true conjugal martyr.

Affairs thus mentally arranged, Andres indulged in the most delightful reveries. Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios held him fast bound to the dictates of the fashionable world and to amusements sanctioned by good taste, all of which were irksome to him, although he dared not rebel against them; he was compelled to adapt himself to a number of English customs,—tea-drinking, the piano, yellow gloves, white cravats, varnished shoes, without any alleviating conditions; to the dance, conversations anent the new fashions, the great Italian airs,—to everything, in fact, that was repugnant to his naturally free and merry disposition. In spite of himself, his old Spanish blood rebelled against the invasion of the northern civilization.

Deeming himself already the fortunate lover of the *manola* of the circo,—and what man is not just a little conceited, in thought, at least?—he saw himself in the young girl's little

room, in shirt-sleeves, and enjoying a repast of pastry, oranges, and conserved fruits, washed down with the wines of Peralta and Pedro Jimenès, more or less genuine in brand, which the *tia* would fetch from the nearest wine-merchant's store.

Taking a *papel de hilo* colored with licorice-juice, the pretty child rolled within a thin paper a pinch of tobacco cut with a *trabuco*, and presented him a cigarette shaped with the most classic exactness.

Then pushing back the table with her foot, she took down from the wall a guitar and a pair of castanets made from pomegranate wood, and handing the first to her lover and adjusting the castanets to her thumbs, clasping them with her pearly teeth, with charmingly supple grace and action began to dance one of those old-fashioned Spanish dances in which Arabia's burning languor and mysterious passion are preserved, murmuring intermittently the while some ancient couplet from a *seguidilla*, strange and incoherent, but intensely poetic.

While Andres abandoned himself to his voluptuous musings with such good faith that he beat the time of the castanets by snapping his fingers, the sun was sinking rapidly and the shadows growing longer. The dinner-hour was drawing near, —for to-day people of means in Madrid adopt the customs of Paris or London as to the hour for meals,—and still Andres's messenger had not returned; even if the young girl had lived at the very farthest part of the city, at the San Joachim or San Gerimon Gate, the young rascal had been long enough, aye, more than long enough, to cover the distance twice, especially considering that for the first part of the journey he was perched on the back of the vehicle.

This delay greatly surprised and vexed Andres, who did not know where to find his messenger, and who saw such an ending to an adventure which had promised to be very piquant. How would he recover the trail once it was lost, when he had not the slightest sign to guide him, not a detail, not even a name, and how could he count on the fickle chance of again meeting her?

"Something has happened, perhaps, which I cannot explain; I will wait a few minutes longer," Andres said to himself.

Taking advantage of the ubiquitous nature allowed to storytellers, we will follow the *calesin* in its rapid journey. At first, it traversed the length of the Prado, then plunged into Calle de San Juan, the agent of Andres still hanging on by hands and feet to its springs; then it reached Calle de los Desamparados. When it had arrived about midway along this street, the *calesero*, feeling the weight of his supercargo, landed a dexterously directed blow from his whip on poor Perico's face which compelled him to relinquish his hold.

After having rubbed his eyes that smarted from the pain, and having recovered the faculty of vision, he observed that the *calesin* had reached the end of Calle de la Fé, and the rattle of the wheels on the uneven paving was dying away. Perico, who, like all young Spaniards, was an excellent runner, feeling the importance of his mission, took to his heels as fast as he could, and would most surely have overtaken the chaise if it had gone in a direct line; but at the end of the street it took a sharp turn, and Perico lost sight of it for a moment. When he turned the same corner, the *calesin* was out of sight. It had entered the maze of streets and lanes that surrounded

Plaza de Lavapiès. Had it entered Calle del Povar, Calle de Santa-Inès, de las Damas, or San Lorenzo? This question Perico could not decide; he ran through them all, hoping to see the *calesin* halted at some door: his hope was falsified; he met only the empty chaise returning through the Plaza, the driver cracking his whip as loud as a pistol-shot in an ironically menacing way as he hurried along to secure another load.

Notwithstanding his failure to accomplish the instructions given by Andres, Perico promenaded for some time those streets in which he conjectured that the *calesin* had set down its two passengers, thinking, with that early-matured passion implanted in children of the south, that so pretty a girl could not fail to have a lover and that she would place herself at the window to watch his coming, or go out to seek him if he did not arrive, as the day of a bull-fight in Madrid is devoted to promenades, secret pleasure-parties, and diversion. This calculation was not altogether at fault; for he saw many pretty smiling faces framed by the windows or peering over the balconies, but the *manola* whom he had been directed to follow was not among them. Weary of his struggle, he bathed his eyes at the Lavapiès Fountain, and went down toward the Prado to give Don Andres an account of his mission. Although he was unable to give the exact address, he was, at least, almost sure that the lovely one lived in one of the four streets that have been mentioned; and as they were very short ones, the task of finding her was decidedly less vague than a search through the whole of Madrid.

If he had remained a few moments longer, he would have seen a second *calesin* stop in front of a house in Calle del



Povar, and a young man, carefully muffled up, and with his cloak over his eyes, leap lightly down from the chaise and plunge into the narrow street. In alighting, he disturbed the folds of his cloak, which displayed some glittering spangles, and a pair of silk stockings spotted with stains of blood and well stretched on a sinewy leg.

You have doubtless ere this recognized Juancho. It was he, indeed. But so far as Perico was concerned, there was no connection between Juancho and Militona, and his presence would not have been any indication of the young girl's dwelling. Moreover, Juancho might be going into his own home. This, in fact, was the most reasonable conclusion. After so dramatic an encounter in the arena, he must need rest and the application of some bandages to the scratches on his arm, for a bull's horns are poisonous, and the wounds they make heal slowly.

Perico proceeded with long strides to the side of the Obelisk of the Second of May, the place where Andres had agreed to meet him. Another obstacle presented itself. Andres was not alone. Doña Feliciano, who had left home to make some purchase with one of her female friends, whom she was driving home, had noticed from her carriage her fiancé walking up and down with feverish impatience; she, as well as her friend, had alighted, and, approaching Andres, had asked him if it was to compose a sonnet or a madrigal that he was wandering about under the trees at an hour when less poetic mortals enjoyed the pleasures of the table. The unfortunate Andres, caught in the very first stages of his intrigue, could not escape blushing somewhat, and stammered forth some

commonplace polite phrases ; in his heart he boiled with rage ; in spite of the smiles that played on his lips, Perico, uncertain of his course, moved around the group, greatly embarrassed ; for, young as he was, he thoroughly understood that it would never do to give a young man a *manola's* address in the presence of a young lady elegantly dressed in the French style. He was, however, astonished to find that a gentleman enjoying the acquaintance of lovely ladies wearing hats should take any interest in a *manola* hooded in a mantilla.

"See that boy who stares at you with his big black eyes as if he wished to swallow you ; what can he want with you ?"

"He is doubtless waiting for me to throw him the butt of this cigar that is gone out," Andres answered, suiting the action to the word, and at the same time making a hardly perceptible sign that meant : "Return later, when I am free."

The boy moved away, and, taking a flint and steel from his pocket, struck a light, and began to suck at the Havana with all the compunction of an accomplished smoker.

But Andres had not reached the end of his trouble. Felicianita tapped her forehead with her tightly-gloved hand, and, as if starting from a dream, said : "Bless me ! I was so much engrossed in our duet from Bellini, that I had forgotten to tell you that my father, Don Geronimo, expects you to dinner. He was going to invite you this morning ; but as I was to see you in the afternoon, I told him that he need not trouble to do so. It is already quite late," she said, after consulting her watch, which was about the size of one's thumb-nail ; "get into the carriage with us, we will set Rosa down at her house, and then go home together."

Lest any one should be surprised at a young person of such good-breeding taking a young man in her carriage, we will remark that on the front seat of the *calèche* was seated an English governess, stiff as a stake, red as a crab, and squeezed into the very longest of corsets, whose aspect alone sufficed to put both love and slander to flight.

There was no way of getting out of it; after presenting his hand to Feliciano and to her friend to aid them in taking their places in the carriage, he took his seat beside Miss Sarah, furious because he could not receive Perico's report,—for he believed him to be better informed than he was,—and vexed at the prospect of an indefinitely protracted musical *soirée*.

In the belief that the description of a bourgeois dinner will afford no pleasure to you, my reader, we will go in search of Militona, hoping to be more fortunate in our quest than Perico.

Militona lived, in fact, in one of the streets that the young spy Perico suspected to contain her domicile. It would be a very difficult matter, indeed, to describe the style of architecture of the dwelling she occupied with many other persons, unless we say that it was of the composite order. The widest range of fantasy suggested the formation of the bays, not one of which resembled its fellows. The builder seemed to have aimed to produce symmetry by contrasts, for no feature of this irregular façade harmonized with another; the walls, almost all out of perpendicular, bulged and appeared ready to sink beneath their own weight; iron crosses and S's hardly kept them together, and were it not for the adjoining houses, which were somewhat solid, against which it leaned, the house must inevitably have fallen across the street; at the foot, large

pieces of plaster had scaled off and exposed the clay walls; above, where the preservation was better, traces of an ancient pink paint were visible which looked, indeed, like blushes spread over the face of the house in shame for its wretched condition.

Close to the roof—the ungovernable tiles of which presented a brown festoon, notched here and there, standing out against an azure sky—appeared a small, cheerful window that had received a recent coat of lime; a cage on the right housed a quail; another on the left, but of tiny proportions, and ornamented with beads of yellow and red glass, served both as the palace and the cell of a cricket; for the Spaniards, who have inherited from the Arabs a taste for persistent rhythms, greatly delight in the monotonous notes uttered at equal intervals by the quail and the cricket. A porous earthen jar hung by the handles to a cord and covered with drops of moisture cooled the water by the rising evening breeze and dripped slowly on two pots of basil that stood beneath it. This window belonged to Militona's chamber. An observer on the street might guess at once that this nest was the home of a young bird; youth and beauty exert their power over even inanimate things, and unconsciously impress them with their seal.

If your fears do not hinder you from ascending with us that stairway with its knotty steps and shining rail, we will follow Militona, who leaps up the broken flight with the elasticity of eighteen-year-old limbs; already she is flooded with the light from the upper floors, while the elderly Aldonza, still confined to the dark limbo of the lower steps, grunts and puffs, invokes

Saint Joseph, and hangs on desperately with both hands to the rope.

The lovely creature stooped, lifted the end of an esparto mat in front of one of those many-panelled pine doors so common in Madrid, and took her key, with which she opened the door.

The chamber was so poorly furnished that it would hardly tempt thieves, and required no very great care as to its security: when she was absent, Militona generally left the door open; but when she occupied it, she closed it carefully. The little den then contained a treasure which, if not tempting to thieves, certainly was to lovers.

A layer of whitewash covered the walls in lieu of paper or hangings; a mirror, the quicksilver of which was scratched, but very imperfectly reflected the charming face that consulted it; a plaster statuette of Saint Antoine, flanked by two blue glass vases containing artificial flowers; a pine table, two chairs, and a small bed covered with a muslin counterpane and having a valance with Vandyke points, constituted the entire furnishing of the chamber. Let us not forget a few images of The Virgin and some saints painted and gilded on glass with Byzantine or Russian simplicity, an engraving commemorative of the Second of May, the burial of Daoiz and Velarde, a picador on horseback after Goya, a tambourine and a guitar; and by a mixture of the sacred and profane, at which the ardent faith of truly Catholic countries does not take fright, between these two instruments of mirth and pleasure was a long, twisted palm-branch brought from the church on Palm-Sunday.

Such, then, was Militona's chamber, and if it contained nothing not absolutely necessary, it had not the cold and dreary aspect of poverty; a cheerful radiance illumined it; the bright red of the brick floor was pleasing to the eye; no ugly shadow could find a place for its bat's claws to cling to in the dazzlingly white corners; no spider stretched his web between the beams of the ceiling; all was fresh, cheerful, and bright within the four walls of this apartment. In England, it would have presented an aspect of the most profound destitution; in Spain, it was almost a comfortable spot, and more than was necessary to enable one to be as happy as in Paradise.

The old woman had finally succeeded in hoisting herself to the end of the stairway; she entered the charming retreat and sank on one of the two chairs, which creaked most threateningly under her weight.

"I beseech you, Militona, unhook the jar that I may take a drink; I am stifling, choking; the dust of this place and those cursed mint pastilles have set my throat on fire."

"One is not obliged to eat them by handfuls, auntie," answered the young girl, with a smile, as she touched the old woman's lips with the jar.

Aldonza took three or four gulps, passed the back of her hand across her lips, and fanned herself rapidly before replying.

"Speaking of pastilles," she said, after relieving herself by a sigh, "what furious looks Juancho gave us! I am certain that he missed the bull because that pretty gentleman spoke to you; he is as jealous as a tiger, that fellow, and if he could have found him, he would have caused him a bad quarter of an hour. I wouldn't give much for that young fellow's hide, for it runs

the risk of being stripped by some famous slashes. Do you remember the pretty slices that he cut from that Luca who wished to present you with a bouquet at the *remeria* of San Isidoro?"

"I hope Juancho will not go to such unpleasant extremes; I asked that young man not to speak another word to me, and in a tone so pleading and yet so decided that from that moment he said nothing more. He understood my fear and pitied me. But what fearful tyranny it is to be so haunted by that ferocious love!"

"It is your fault," said the old woman. "Why are you so pretty?"

A sharp knock at the door, as if from an iron knuckle, cut the two women's conversation short.

The old creature rose and went to open the shutter that covered the grating in the door placed at a man's height according to the Spanish custom.

Juancho's face appeared at the opening, pale-looking in spite of the bronzed tint that the sun had imparted to it in the arena.

Aldonza opened the door half-way, and Juancho entered. His face betrayed the violent emotions that had possessed him in the circus; it expressed concentrated rage; for to one who was so keenly alive to the point of honor the huzzas could not wipe out the stigma of the hisses; he considered himself dishonored, and felt compelled to exhibit the most reckless bravery in order to restore his prestige not only in the eyes of the public, but also in his own.

But what concerned him above all else, and increased his fury almost beyond endurance, was his failure to be able to



leave the arena in time to meet the young man who had acted so gallantly toward Militona; where could he find him now? Doubtless he had followed the young girl and spoken to her again.

At this thought, his hand mechanically sought his belt to reach his knife.

He sat down upon the second chair; Militona, leaning against the window, tore in pieces the capsule of a red pink that had fallen from its stem; the old woman fanned herself to preserve appearances; while a general silence fell upon the party, which was at length broken by the old woman.

"Juancho," she asked, "does your arm still pain you?"

"No," answered the torero, fixing his glance on Militona.

"Water and salt compresses should be put to it," she continued, in order to sustain the conversation.

But Juancho made no answer, and as if he were in the grasp of one thought, he said to Militona:

"Who was that young man who sat beside you at the circo?"

"It is the first time I have met him; I don't know him."

"But you would like to know him?"

"That supposition is a polite one. Well, then! what if I should?"

"If you should, I would kill him, the pretty fellow with polished boots, white gloves, and frock-coat."

"Juancho, you speak like a madman: have I given you grounds for jealousy? You say you love me; is that my fault, and must I, because it pleases your fancy to consider me pretty, set about adoring you at once?"

"Exactly, quite true, she is not obliged to," said the old dame; "nevertheless, you would make a handsome couple! No more delicate hand could be placed on arm more vigorous, and if you danced the cachuca together at Las Delicias Garden, people would stand on chairs to watch you."

"Have I played the coquette with you, Juancho? Have I sought to attract you by ogling smiles or sidelong glances?"

"No," answered the torero, in a hollow voice.

"I have never given you any promise, or permitted you to indulge in hopes; I have invariably said: 'Forget me!' Why, then, do you trouble me or annoy me by your entirely unwarrantable violence? Is it a necessary consequence of my pleasing you that I must not glance at a man without calling forth a sentence of death? Will you always create a desert about me? You maimed poor Luca, a brave fellow who amused me and made me laugh; you grievously wounded Ginès, your own friend, merely because he touched my hand; do you think such things calculated to advance your own cause? To-day, you acted in a most extravagant manner in the arena; while you were spying on me, you allowed the bull to reach you and you dealt him a very sorry thrust!"

"But that was because I love you, Militona, with all the strength of my soul, all the passion of the blood that consumes my veins; it is because I see only you in the world, and a bull's horn piercing my breast would not induce me to turn my head when you smiled at another man. My manner is not gentle, truly, for I have passed my youth in hand-to-hand struggles with savage beasts; every day, I kill and risk being killed; I cannot feel the gentleness of those pretty

young fellows, delicate as women, who waste their time in having their locks curled and reading the papers!—At any rate, if you are not mine, no other shall have you!” continued Juancho, after a pause, striking the table with great force, and as if summing up a mental soliloquy by this blow of his fist.

Thereupon, he rose abruptly and left the room, muttering :

“I know very well where to find him, and will put three inches of steel into his stomach.”

Let us now return to Andres, who, standing piteously before the piano, accomplishes his part in Bellini’s duet with such a wealth of false notes as to drive Feliciano to despair. Never had a fashionable soirée inspired him with more *ennui*, and he sent the Marchioness of Benavides and her tertulia to all the devils.

The pure and delicate profile of the young *manola*, her jet tresses, her Arabian eye, her native grace, her picturesque costume, allowed him to take but a very indifferent pleasure in the turbaned dowagers who graced the salon of the marchioness. He thought his fiancée unmistakably ugly, and on leaving felt that he was assuredly over head and ears in love with Militona.

As he went along Calle d’Alcala on his way home, he felt a tug at his coat-tail; it was Perico, who, having secured further information, was determined to render an account of his work, and so perhaps receive the promised douro.

“Cavalier,” said the boy, “she lives in Calle del Povar, the third house on the right. I saw her a little time ago at her window, taking the jar to cool the water.”

## IV

"One does not know all when one has found the dove's nest," said Don Andres to himself, as he woke from a sleep, during which Militona's gracious image had presented itself to his mind; "it is indispensable that I should get to her. But how shall I accomplish it? I can hardly see how to succeed unless I cruise about in front of her house, and watch the tenants and the surroundings. But if I go into that quarter dressed as I am, like the last fashion-plate from Paris, I shall excite attention, and that would be an obstacle to my reconnoitring operations. Within a given time, she must either leave or enter the house; for I cannot suppose she has her chamber provisioned for six months with nuts and sugar-plums; I will approach her in passing with some gallantly-phrased remark, and I shall speedily discover if she is as shy in the matter of conversation as she was on the Plaza; I will hie to the Rastro and purchase the requisite articles to transform myself from a dandy into a *manolo*; thus disguised, I shall not arouse the suspicion of jealous lover or ferocious brother, and I shall be able, without seeming to notice aught, to take observations about my fair one."

This plan decided on, Andres got up, hastily swallowed a cup of chocolate *à l'eau*, and betook himself to the Rastro, which is, like the Temple of Madrid, the place where everything can be found, save a new article. He was quite jovial and happy; the bare idea that the young girl might not love him, or that she might love another, never entered his mind;

he had that species of confidence that rarely errs, for it is like the prescience of sympathy; the old Spanish love of adventure awoke within him. This disguise pleased him, and although the infanta to be won was only a *manola*, he promised himself the enjoyment of promenading beneath her window in a cloak of the color of the walls; the hazard of which the young girl's terror gave a foreshadowing put this conquest out of the category of commonplace adventures.

As he made plan after plan in rapid succession, only to realize that his stratagems would not serve his purpose, Andres found himself at the Rastro.

A very odd spot is the Rastro. Picture to yourself a hilly plateau, a sort of knoll surrounded by miserable and insanitary houses, where all kinds of questionable occupations are carried on.

Upon this eminence and in the adjacent streets are settled the dealers in bric-à-brac of inferior quality, old clothes, old iron, rags, broken bottles; indeed, all kinds of old, filthy, ragged, and cast-off things. Stained and torn things, unrecognizable fragments, broken pottery, even the nails from the gutter, find purchasers there. It is a singular gathering in which rags of every condition meet philosophically: the old court dress-coat from which the lace has been ripped elbows the peasant's jacket with its many-colored ornaments; the skirt stripped of its silvery spangles, erstwhile worn by the danseuse, hangs beside a patched and threadbare cassock. Picadors' stirrups are promiscuously thrown with artificial flowers, odd volumes, old black and yellow pictures and portraits which no longer interest any one. Rabelais and

Balzac would fill four pages in the mere enumeration of this medley.

In ascending toward the Plaza, however, one sees a few shops of a more dignified sort, in which clothes are offered for sale, which, while not new, are yet clean, and could be worn by others than the subjects of the realm of the bull-ring.

It was one of these shops that Andres entered.

He selected a tolerably fresh-looking *manolo* costume, which in its first days must have secured for its lucky owner many a conquest in the Red San Luis, the Calle del Barquillo, and the Plaza Santa Ana: this costume consisted of a low-crowned hat with broad brim turned up turban-shaped and trimmed with velvet, snuff-colored jacket with small buttons, large pantaloons, a broad silk girdle, and a sombre-hued mantle. The whole had been worn just enough to rob it of its first lustre, but not of a certain degree of elegance.

Andres viewed himself in a large bevelled Venetian glass mirror, set in a magnificent frame, which had come from nobody knew where, and felt satisfied with his inspection. In short, his appearance was easy and elegant, and suited to the impressionable hearts of Lavapiès.

After paying for the clothes and ordering them to be set aside, he told the dealer that he would return in the evening and dress in his shop, as he did not wish to be seen leaving his establishment in disguise.

On his way back, he passed through the Calle del Povar; he at once recognized the window surrounded with white and the hanging jar which Perico had described; but nothing seemed to indicate the presence of any one within the room:

a carefully-drawn muslin curtain obstructed the view from without.

“Doubtless she has gone out to attend to her work ; she will not return till the day is over, for she must be a seamstress, a cigar-maker, an embroiderer, or something of the sort,” thought Andres, and he continued on his way.

Militona had not gone out ; but, leaning over the table, she was fitting the various parts of the waist of a gown that was spread before her. Though there was nothing mysterious in her occupation, the door was locked, owing doubtless to her dread that Juancho would suddenly rush in, which, in the absence of Aldonza, would have been fraught with more danger.

As she proceeded with her work, she thought of the young man who watched her the previous night at the Circo with glances of such ardor and at the same time so tender, and whose few words were uttered in such tones that they still echoed in her ear.

“If only he doesn’t try to see me again ! and yet it would give me pleasure if he did. Juancho would provoke some dreadful quarrel with him, he would perhaps kill him, or at any rate wound him seriously, like all those who have sought to please me ; and even if I should be able to escape Juancho’s tyranny, who has followed me from Granada to Seville, from Seville to Madrid, and who would track me to the end of the world to prevent me from bestowing the affection on another that I refuse to him, how would that benefit me ? This young man is not of my class ; that he is rich and noble his dress declares ; he can only feel a passing caprice for me ; doubtless he has already forgotten me.”



At this point, truth demands that we should say that a slight cloud darkened the young girl's brow, and a prolonged respiration that might be taken for a sigh swelled her oppressed bosom.

"No doubt he has a mistress, a fiancée, young, pretty, elegant, who wears splendid hats and magnificent shawls. How fine he would look in a jacket embroidered in colored silk with buttons of filigreed silver, Ronda boots with ornamental stitching, and a little Andalusian hat. How fine his waist would look confined by a rich Gibraltar silk belt!" Militona said, as she continued her monologue, and by an innocent subterfuge of the heart arraying Andres in a costume which brought him more nearly to her own condition.

She had reached thus far in her musings, when Aldonza, who lived in the same house, knocked at the door.

"Don't you know, my dear," she asked Militona, "that that mad fellow, Juancho, instead of going to dress his arm, walked up and down all night in front of your window, doubtless to discover whether the young man you saw at the Circo was roaming about here? He got it into his head that you had given him an appointment. What if that were so? how easy it would be? Why don't you love this poor Juancho? he would leave you in peace."

"Let us not speak of that; I am not accountable for the love that I have in no way aroused."

"It isn't," continued the old woman, "that the young cavalier of the Plaza de los Toros is not of comely appearance and very gallant; he tendered me the box of pastilles with much grace and with all the respect due to my sex; but

Juancho bothers me, and I fear him like all the legion of demons! He considers me somewhat in the light of your chaperon, and would be quite capable of holding me responsible for your favoring another. He keeps such a close watch on you that it would be very difficult to hide the slightest thing from him."

"According to you, one would suppose that I had already arranged matters with that gentleman, whose features I hardly remember," replied Militona, blushing slightly.

"If you have forgotten him, he remembers you, I'll warrant; he could draw your portrait from memory; he didn't once take his eyes off you throughout the whole of the events; one would have said he was in ecstasy before a statue of Our Lady."

While listening to these confirmatory testimonies of Andres's love, Militona leaned over her work without venturing a reply; a strange happiness filled her heart.

Juancho was far from experiencing similar tender sentiments; shut up in his chamber decorated with swords and devices which he had carried off at the peril of his life in order to lay them before Militona, who had not desired them, he gave way to the endlessly repeated reflections of unhappy lovers: he could not understand why Militona should not love him; her aversion to him seemed an insoluble problem of which he vainly pursued the unknown quantity. Was he not young, handsome, lusty, full of ardor and courage? had not the whitest hands in Spain applauded him a thousand times? were not his suits embroidered with as much gold and set off with as many ornaments as those of the most gallant toreadors?

was not his portrait lithographed, printed on silk handkerchiefs with laudatory couplets that were sold everywhere, like those of the masters of his profession? Who save Montès only could plant a better thrust at a bull and bring him to his knees more valiantly than he? No one, indeed. Gold, the price of his blood, flowed through his fingers as freely as quicksilver. What lacked he, then? In good faith he sought for some defect, but could find none; and he could not explain that antipathy, or at least coldness, except by assuming that she loved another. That other, he pursued him everywhere; the most trifling cause excited his jealousy and rage; he who caused the most ferocious animals to recoil was crushed by the freezing persistency of that young girl. The idea had more than once occurred to him of killing her to break the spell he was under. This frenzy had lasted for a whole year, that is to say, since the day he first saw Militona, for his love, like that of all intense passions, had immediately acquired its full strength: immensity cannot grow.

In order to encounter Andres, he had concluded that it was necessary to frequent the Salon of the Prado, the Circo and Principe theatres, the stylish cafés, and the other places resorted to by people of fashion; and although he professed to hold the manners of the bourgeois in contempt, and was generally dressed as a *majo*, a redingote, black pantaloons, and a round hat were lying on a chair: he had gone in the morning to purchase them under the pillars of Calle Mayor, at the very moment when Andres made his purchase at the Rastro; the same plan had been adopted by both: the one to accomplish the purpose of his hate, the other, that of his love.

Feliciana, whom Andres did not fail to visit at the accustomed hour with the promptness of a clandestine lover, reproached him bitterly for the faulty rendering and numberless distractions of which he had been guilty overnight at the house of the Marquesa de Benavides. It was certainly worth the trouble of so carefully rehearsing the duet and singing it daily, only to exhibit such a fiasco at the solemn soirée. Andres excused himself as well as possible. His faults had only made the imperturbable talent of Feliciana shine more brilliantly, her voice had never been better, and she had sung well enough to make Ronconi of the Circo theatre jealous; he had but little trouble to pacify her; for they parted the best of friends.

Evening had come, and Juancho, dressed in his modern costume that rendered him unrecognizable, hastened with a jerky and feverish step along the avenues of the Prado, watching the face of every man going or coming, and trying to be everywhere at the same moment; he entered all the theatres, searching with his eagle eye the orchestra, the proscenium, and the boxes; he swallowed all kinds of ices in the cafés, mixed with all the groups of politicians and poets who were discussing the new piece; but all in vain, for he could see no one who resembled the young man who spoke so tenderly to Militona on the day of the bull-fight, for the very good reason that Andres, who had gone to don his costume at the dealer's, was sipping, in the most leisurely manner possible, at that very moment, a glass of iced lemonade in an *orchateria de chufas*, just opposite Militona's house, where he had taken up his post of observation, with

Perico as his scout. Besides, Juancho would have passed him without looking at him ; the idea would never enter his head to look for his rival in a man wearing a round jacket and the *sombrero de calaña* of a *manolo*. Militona, who was hiding in the recess of the window, was not deceived for an instant, but then love is more perspicacious than hate. A prey to the keenest anxiety, she questioned herself as to the object the young man had in view in taking up his position in that shop, and she dreaded the terrible scene which could not fail to be the result of an encounter between Juancho and him.

Andres, leaning his elbows on the table, watched with the attentiveness of a police-spy investigating a plot all who entered the house. Women, men, children, people of all ages, passed in considerable numbers at first, for the house was tenanted by many families, then they appeared only at intervals ; little by little, night had come, and there were only a few belated ones to enter. Militona had not made her appearance.

Andres was beginning to doubt the correctness of his messenger's information, when the dark window was lighted up, showing that the room was occupied.

He was certain that Militona was in her room, but that did not further his plan much ; he wrote a few words with a pencil on a slip of paper, and, calling Perico, who was prowling about the neighborhood, bade him take it to the lovely *manola*.

Perico, following in the footsteps of a tenant who was entering the house, found himself on the dark staircase, and, groping along the wall, succeeded in arriving at the upper landing.

The gleam of light that filtered through the openings in the wood-work enabled him to discover the door which should be Militona's; he gave two discreet knocks; the young girl half-opened the wicket, took the letter, and closed the little shutter.

"It is to be hoped she can read," said Andres, as he finished his iced beverage and paid Valencien, the master of the *orchateria*.

He got up and walked slowly beneath the window. This is what the letter contained:

"A man who cannot forget you, and who would not, desires to see you again; but after the few words you spoke to him at the Circo, and having no knowledge of your life, he would be afraid to venture lest he should cause you some unpleasantness. If danger threatened him only, he would not hesitate. Extinguish your lamp, and throw your reply to him out of the window."

After the lapse of a few minutes, the lamp disappeared, the window was opened, and Militona, in reaching her cooling jar, overturned one of the pots of sweet basil, which broke into atoms as it fell a short distance from Andres.

Amid the brown earth scattered over the pavement something white gleamed; it was Militona's answer.

Andres called a *sereno* (night-watchman) who was passing with his lantern swinging at the end of his staff, and begged him to lower the lantern, by the light of which he read in large letters written by a trembling hand:

“Hurry away—— I have no time to write you more. To-morrow, I will be inside the church of San Isidore at ten o'clock. But, for mercy's sake, go: your life is at stake.”

“Thanks, my good man,” said Andres, as he put a real in the hand of the sereno, “you may now continue your beat.”

The street was utterly deserted, and Andres was moving slowly away, when his curiosity was aroused by the appearance of a man wrapped in a cloak, under which the neck of a guitar traced an acute angle; he crouched in a dark corner to observe the comer's movements.

The man threw the corners of his cloak back over his shoulders, drew his guitar forward, and began to make its strings hum a rhythm which serves both as bass and accompaniment to the melodies of the seguidilla and the serenade.

It was evident that these noisy preludes had for object the awakening of the fair creature in whose honor this clamor was produced; and as Militona's window remained closed, the man, obliged to content himself with an unseen audience, in spite of the Spanish dictum that claims no woman is so soundly asleep that the trembling of a guitar will not bring her to the window, after uttering hum! hum! in a deeply sonorous tone, began to sing the following stanzas, with a strong Andalusian accent:

“O child with all an empress' air,  
O dove with glance like falcon's keen,  
Thou hatest me, yet stand I dare  
Beneath thy balcony at e'en.



“ And here upon the curbstone posed,  
On my guitar I'll strum at night,  
Till on thy window dark and closed  
Thy lamp and brow shall shed their light.

“ Near thee I will that no guitar  
Should speak a lover's tender plea ;  
Thy street's for me alone, I bar  
Thereout, deny all swains but me.

“ I'll snip off both his ears who'll dare  
Before the chamber where thou art,  
With fiddles' squeaking voice lay bare,  
In measure good or bad, his heart.

“ Stirs in its sheath my blade most true ;  
Who wants the tint incarnadine ?  
Who'd have a spot of deep red hue  
On's frill like garnet stud to shine ?

“ The blood flows slowly through each vein,  
'Tis made to show itself, indeed ;  
The sky is black, beware the rain !  
Ye cowards homeward quickly speed.

“ Come forth, ye bullies, craven race,  
With cloak upon your forearm laid,  
And crosses in each braggart's face  
I'll deftly cut with my knife blade.

“ In groups or singly, come forth all !  
Foot-firm I wait in fettle fit.  
In thy fair name, at honor's cali,  
These braves' vile nostrils I must slit.

“Across the gutter’s filth, I’d make  
A bridge as path for thy white feet :  
Ye gods ! These gallants’ ribs I’ll take  
Whereof to make my arch complete.

“Whoe’er thou wilt, bid me but kill  
To prove how deep my love for thee ;  
On Satan’s self I’ll test my skill  
If thy two sheets my shroud may be.

“Thy window’s blind ! and deaf thy door !  
Yet thou my voice shouldst know.  
Like wounded bull I madly roar  
The while the dogs more furious grow.

“A nail, at least, drive in your door,  
That I my heart thereon may clasp ;  
What boots it hence to take it more,  
I languid die in fury’s grasp.”

“Plague on the fool ! what savage verses !” thought Andres ; “those stanzas do not fail on the score of insipidity. Let us see if Militona, for it is in her honor that this nocturnal racket is made, is alive to these elegiac verses, composed by Matamore, Don Spavento, Fracasse, or Tranchemontagne. This is, in all probability, the terrible gallant who inspires her with so much fear. One should at least feel afraid.”

Don Andres having thrust his head slightly beyond the shadow that sheltered him, the rays of the moon fell on him, and he was exposed to the watchful eye of Juancho.

“Good ! I am caught,” said Andres ; “let us put a good face on it.”

Juancho threw his guitar to the ground and the pavement dolefully echoed back the sound ; then he ran toward Andres, whom, his face being illuminated, he at once recognized.

"What do you here at this hour?" he asked in a voice trembling with rage.

"I am listening to your music : it is a charming treat."

"If you have heard it attentively, you must have understood that I forbid any one whomsoever to be in this street while I am singing."

"I am by nature very disobedient," replied Andres, with perfect self-possession.

"You will change your nature to-day."

"Not in the least, I am attached to my habits."

"So! then defend yourself, or die like a dog!" cried Juancho, as he drew his *navaja* and wound his cloak about his arm.

These movements were copied by Andres, who placed himself on guard with a promptness that evinced great science and surprised the torero somewhat, for Andres had practised for a long time under one of the most skilful masters in Seville, just as at Paris young dandies practise the sword-stick, the staff, and the *savate*, reduced to mathematical principles by Lecour and Boucher.

Juancho circled about his adversary, presenting as a buckler his left arm protected by several thicknesses of cloth, while his right was drawn back so as to give more force and play to his thrust ; now rising to his full height and towering like a giant, now crouching on his haunches diminutive as a dwarf ; but the point of his knife always met the twisted cape that Andres presented in parrying his thrusts.

At times, he would beat a hasty retreat, again he would rush forward in impetuous attack ; he leaped to right and to left, poising his blade like a javelin and pretending to cast it.

Andres several times met these attacks by such lively and well-directed thrusts that any other than Juancho would have been unable to parry them. It was, indeed, a splendid combat, and worthy of a gallery of skilled spectators ; but, unhappily, all the windows were closed and the street was completely deserted. Academicians of the Playa de San Lucar, of the Potro of Cordova, of the Alvaycin of Granada, and of the Barrio de Triana, oh that you had been there to pass judgment on those magnificent strokes !

The two adversaries, vigorous though they were, began to grow tired ; the sweat trickled from their temples, their breasts heaved as they panted like the bellows of a forge, their feet struck the ground heavily, and their bounds had lost some of their elasticity.

Juancho felt the point of Andres's knife penetrate his sleeve, and his rage augmented ; then, venturing a supreme effort, even at the risking of being killed, he leaped on his opponent with the fury of a tiger.

Andres fell backward, and in so doing forced open the insecurely fastened door of Militona's house, in front of which the combat was waged. Juancho moved away quietly. The sereno who passed the corner of the street shouted : "Nothing new, half after eleven, starlight, and fine !"

## V

Juancho had moved away as he heard the voice of the watchman, without satisfying himself whether Andres were killed or simply wounded ; he believed he had killed him, so sure was he that his stroke was, so to speak, infallible. The struggle had been fair, and he felt no remorse whatever ; the gloomy satisfaction of being freed from his rival overshadowed every other consideration in his mind.

Militona's anxiety during the struggle—for the low sound of the combat had attracted her to the window—cannot be described ; she tried to cry out, but her tongue clung to the roof of her mouth, fear choked her with its iron grasp ; tottering, distracted, half-mad, she descended the stairway at random, or rather she allowed herself to slide down the rail like an inert body. She arrived at the very moment when Andres fell and forced open the ill-fastened door.

Luckily, Juancho did not observe the despairing and passionate movement with which the young girl threw herself on Andres's body ; or, instead of committing one murder, he would have accomplished two.

She placed her hand on Andres's heart and thought she felt a feeble pulsation ; the sereno passed, repeating his monotonous refrain ; Militona called him to her aid. The worthy gallego ran to her, and, approaching his lantern to the wounded man's face, he said : " Bless me ! it is the young man to whom I lent my lamp to read a letter," and he bent over him to ascertain if he were dead or alive.

The watchman, with his strongly marked features and rough but kindly expression ; the young girl, with her face as white as wax, rendered still more strikingly pale by the effect of her black eyebrows ; the inanimate body whose head she supported on her knees,—formed a group that might tempt the pencil of Rembrandt. The yellow light from the lantern cast strange reflections on these three figures, and formed a central point like a scintillating star such as the Dutch painter loved to paint in his ruddy shadows ; yet perhaps it would have demanded a purer and more exact pencil than his to have depicted the extraordinary beauty of Militona, who seemed a statue of Grief kneeling at a tomb.

“He is breathing,” said the sereno, after a few moments’ examination ; “let us look at his wound.” He threw open Andres’s clothes ; he was still unconscious. “Ah ! there is a fine cut,” he cried, with a sort of respectful astonishment, “struck downward, according to regulation : it is splendidly done. If I am not mistaken, this is the work of a Sevillian. I am well-up in knife-cuts ; I have seen so many ! But what is to be done with this young man ? he cannot be removed, and if he could be, where should we take him ? He cannot tell us his address.”

“Let us take him up to my room,” said Militona ; “since I am the first to come to his aid, he belongs to me.”

The sereno brought his assistant to the spot by means of the regulation signal, and both commenced a cautious ascent of the rough stairway. Militona followed them, supporting the body with her tiny hands, and striving to spare the wounded man the shocks of the transit ; he was laid upon her little virginal bed with its pinked muslin coverlet.

One of the serenos went in search of a surgeon, and while Militona tore up some linen to make bandages and lint, the other examined Andres's pockets in order to discover some letter or card that might serve to identify him. He found nothing. The scrap of paper on which Militona warned Andres of the danger he was in had fallen out of his pocket during the fight, and the wind had carried it far away; so that, until the injured man regained consciousness, there was nothing to put the police on the right track.

Militona told of how she had heard the noise of a quarrel, then of a man falling, but she disclosed nothing further. Although she did not love Juancho, she would not denounce him for a crime of which she was the involuntary cause. The violent outbreaks of the torero, although they terrified her, evinced a boundless passion, which, even if one does not share it, one is always secretly flattered at inspiring.

The surgeon arrived at length and examined the wound, which was not very serious: the blade of the knife had turned against a rib. The force of the blow and the violence of the fall, in addition to the loss of blood, had stunned Andres, who regained consciousness when the probe touched the edge of the wound. The first object that met his glance was Militona, who was handing the surgeon a bandage. The old Aldonza, who had hastened to the spot on hearing the noise, was standing at the other side of the bed murmuring expressions of condolence.

The surgeon having finished dressing the wound, withdrew, with the announcement that he would return on the morrow.



## Chapter V

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*The watchman, with his strongly marked features and rough but kindly expression; the young girl, with her face as white as wax, rendered still more strikingly pale by the effect of her black eyebrows; the inanimate body whose head she supported on her knees,—formed a group that might tempt the pencil of Rembrandt.*







Andres, whose ideas were beginning to grow clear, cast a somewhat vague glance about him ; he was astonished to find himself in that white chamber, lying on that pure, small bed, between an angel and a sorceress ; his swoon created a blank in his memory, and he could not explain the transition from the street, where he had just been defending himself from Juancho's *navaja* to the fresh paradise inhabited by Militona.

"I told you rightly that Juancho would make trouble. What a furious glance he cast at us ! that could not be mistaken. Here we are in a fine plight ! And what will it be when he learns that you have received this young man in your room ! "

"Could I let him die at my door, when I am the cause of his misfortune ? " answered Militona. "Moreover, Juancho will say nothing ; he will have enough to do to escape the punishment he deserves."

"Ah, look ! the sick man is recovering consciousness," said the old woman ; "look ! his eyes are half-open and a little color is returning to his cheeks."

"Do not talk, the surgeon has forbidden it," said the young woman, observing that Andres endeavored to utter some remark, and, assuming the petty air of authority customary with nurses, she placed her hand on the young man's bloodless lips.

When the dawn, greeted by the note of the quail and the chirping of the cricket, had penetrated with its rosy beams the gloom of the little room, it presented a picture that would make Juancho roar with rage ; Militona, who had been watching at the wounded man's bedside through the long night,

worn out with fatigue and the emotions she had experienced, was asleep, and her head, nodding under the influence of drowsiness, had at last sought, without her knowledge, support on the corner of the pillow on which Andres reposed. Her lovely tresses were unbound and spread out in black waves over the white sheets, and Andres, who was awake, had entwined one of her curls about his fingers.

In truth, the young man's wound and the presence of the old woman, who snored loudly enough at the other end of the room to make the pedal of the organ of Notre Dame at Seville blush with envy, precluded all improper interpretation of this act.

If Juancho could have suspected that, instead of giving his rival his death-blow, he had afforded him the occasion to enter Militona's room, to be laid on that bed which he, a man with heart of steel and arm of iron, could not look upon without trembling and turning pale, and to pass the night in that chamber to which he could hardly obtain admission during the day, and before which he wandered in the dark, irritated and grumbling, he would have rolled on the ground in anger, and torn his breast with his finger-nails.

Andres, though he had sought to be near Militona, had never thought of this means amid all his stratagems.

The young girl awoke, and with evident confusion fastened up her hair, and questioned the sick man as to his condition.

"Well!" he replied, looking at the lovely girl with an expression of love and gratitude.

Andres's servants, finding that he had not returned, surmised that he had been present at some merry supper-party,

or had gone to the country, and gave themselves no further trouble about his absence.

Feliciana awaited in vain the customary visit. Andres came not. The piano suffered in consequence, for, annoyed by his absence, Feliciana struck the keys nervously and jerkily; in Spain, to fail to call on one's *novia* at the stipulated hour is a grave omission that calls down the terms of ingrate and perfidious on the head of the offender. Not that Feliciana was violently in love with Andres: passion was not in her nature; indeed, it would have seemed to her a troublesome matter; she was accustomed to seeing him, however, and in the relation of future spouse she already regarded him as her property. Twenty times she went from the piano to the balcony, and, contrary to the English custom, which does not permit a woman to look out of the window, she leaned forward to see if Don Andres were approaching.

"I shall doubtless see him on the Prado this evening," thought Feliciana, as if to console herself, "and I will read him a rare sermon."

At seven o'clock on summer evenings, the Prado is assuredly one of the loveliest promenades in the world; not that elsewhere there are not cooler shades and a more picturesque site, but nowhere can a livelier scene be found, or a merrier gathering of people.

The Prado extends from the Puerta de los Recolets to the Puerta d'Atocha, but it is little frequented except in the section lying between the Calle d'Alcala and the Calle de San Geronimo. This part is known as the Salon, a name that suggests little that is rural for a promenade. Rows of dwarfed



trees, lopped in order to force the foliage to spread, provide a niggardly shade for the loungers.

The way reserved for carriages is lined with chairs, as on the Boulevard de Gand, and rows of candelabra in the style of those on the Place de la Concorde, which have taken the place of the graceful, fluted iron posts that until lately supported the lamps.

On this roadway, carriages from London and Brussels are paraded, tilburys, calèches, landaus with armorial bearings, and occasionally, too, the old Spanish coach drawn by four sleek and glossy-coated mules.

The dandies lean forward on their English trotters, or make their pretty Andalusian horses prance, as with manes braided with red, and necks full and rounded like a pigeon's throat, they move with the undulating grace of the hips of an Arab dancing-girl. From time to time, a magnificent Cordovan barb, black as ebony and worthy to eat barley that had been hulled in an alabaster mill in the stables of a caliph, would pass at a gallop, or some prodigy of beauty, one of Murillo's Virgins taken from its panel and enthroned in a carriage, crowned with a Beaudrand hat in place of an aureole.

The Salon proper swarms with an ever-changing throng, a living river with counter-currents, eddies, and whirlpools, which flows between quays formed of rows of sitting persons.

Mantillas of white or black lace frame with their airy folds the most heavenly faces that can be seen. Ugliness is a rare exception. On the Prado, ugly women are the merely pretty ones; fans open and close with a rapid, whistling sound, and the *agurs* (salutations) given in passing are accompanied by

gracious smiles, or little significant movements of the hand ; it is like the foyer of the Opéra during the Carnival, or a bal masqué without the domino.

On the other side, along the avenues facing the park of artillery and the picture-gallery, some misanthropic smokers, hardly sauntering, prefer to the heat and commotion of the crowd the coolness and repose of the evening.

Feliciana, who was riding in an open carriage by the side of her father, Don Geronimo, vainly looked for her fiancé among the groups of young horsemen ; he came not, as he was wont to do, to caracole beside her carriage. The observant ones were surprised to see Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios's calèche traverse the whole length of the roadway four times without its ordinary escort.

After a time, not seeing Andres among the equestrian promenaders, Feliciana thought that he might be among the pedestrians at the Salon, and she intimated to her father her desire to walk.

Three or four turns taken through the Salon and the avenues adjoining convinced her that Andres was not present.

A young Englishman, who had been recommended to Don Geronimo, greeted him and began one of those labored conversations, with the strangest of cluckings and intonations, that only the people of Great Britain have the perseverance to maintain in a language they are ignorant of.

Feliciana, who had a tolerably ready acquaintance with the *Vicar of Wakefield*, came to the aid of the young islander with charming courtesy, and lavishly bestowed her sweetest smiles on him as he uttered his frightful whinings. At the

Teatro del Circo, which they next visited, she explained to him the nomenclature of the boxes. Still Andres did not appear.

On reaching home, Feliciano remarked to her father :

“No one has seen Andres to-day.”

“True,” said Geronimo, “I will send to his house. He must be ill.”

The servant returned in half an hour, and said :

“Don Andres de Salcedo has not been seen at his house since yesterday.”

## VI

The next day passed without bringing any news of Andres. All his friends were called on ; no one had seen him for two days.

The matter was becoming perplexing. His absence was attributed to a sudden journey on some important business. The servants replied to Don Geronimo's inquiries that their young master had gone out two evenings before at six o'clock, after dining as usual, and without making any preparations or saying aught that gave room to suppose he contemplated a journey. He was dressed in a black redingote, a yellow waistcoat of English piqué, and white trousers, as if he were going to the Prado.

Don Geronimo was greatly puzzled, and said that Andres's chamber should be examined in order to ascertain whether

he had left any note there explaining the cause of his disappearance.

There was no paper in Andres's room save cigarette paper.

How was this incomprehensible absence to be explained?

Was it suicide?

Andres had no love-sorrow, no money troubles, since he was soon to marry her whom he loved, and enjoyed an assured income of one hundred thousand reals. Besides, in the month of June, how could one drown one's self in the Manzanares without digging a pit?

Was he waylaid?

Andres had no enemies, or, at any rate, no one knew of his having any. His gentle disposition and even temper precluded the idea of a duel or a quarrel in which he might have fallen; then, too, the circumstance would have been known, and, dead or alive, Andres would have been taken to his house.

There was, therefore, some mystery involved which only the police could solve.

Geronimo, with the simplicity of all upright people, believed in the all-seeing power and infallibility of the police; he therefore turned to them.

The police, in the person of the alcade of the district, posed his spectacles on his nose and consulted his registers, but found nothing since the date of Andres's disappearance that could relate to him. The night had been one of the quietest known in the most noble and heroic city of Madrid: save for some cases of burglary or escalade, some disturbances in places of ill-fame, some drunken brawls in wine-shops, all had passed in the most satisfactory way possible.

"There is, however," said the grave official before shutting up his register, "a trifling case of attempted murder in the neighborhood of the Plaza de Lavapiés."

"Oh! señor," replied Geronimo, now become alarmed, "can you give me some details?"

"What clothes had Don Andres de Salcedo on when he left home?" asked the police official, with an air of deep reflection.

"A black redingote," answered Geronimo, in a very anxious tone.

"Can you affirm," continued the alcade, "that it was perfectly black, and not brown-black, bronze-green, dark-blue, or chestnut-colored, for example? the exact shade is very important."

"It was black, of that I am certain; I would declare that on honor. Yes, before God and men, the redingote worn by my future son-in-law was of that color—*distingué*, as my daughter Feliciana says."

"Your replies denote a very careful education," added the magistrate in a parenthetical way. "So you are certain the redingote was black?"

"Yes, worthy magistrate, black; such is my conviction, and no one will alter it."

"The victim wore a round jacket, called a Marseillaise and snuff-colored. Strictly speaking, a black redingote might pass at night for a brown jacket," muttered the magistrate, who appeared to be communing with himself. "Don Geronimo, does your memory enable you to recall what waistcoat Don Andres wore that evening?"

"A yellow waistcoat of English piqué."

"The injured man wore a blue waistcoat with fligree buttons; there is but little connection between yellow and blue; that does not agree very well.—And the trousers, señor, if you please?"

"White, señor, of drill, with straps, and fitting closely over the boots. I have these details from Don Andres's valet, who helped him to dress on the fatal day."

"The report gives wide trousers of gray cloth, and white calf-skin shoes. This costume is that of a *majo*, of a dandiprat of the class who would have received this evil blow as the result of a combat waged in honor of a short-skirted lass. With all possible allowance, Señor de Salcedo cannot be recognized in this person. Besides, here is the description of the wounded man, most carefully reported by the watchman: 'oval face, round chin, brow ordinary, nose medium size, and no particular characteristics.' Do you recognize Señor de Salcedo in this portrait?"

"Not in the least," replied Don Geronimo, fully convinced.

"But how are we to discover trace of Andres?"

"Don't disturb yourself, the police department looks after citizens; it has its eye on everything, hears everything, and is ubiquitous; nothing escapes it; Argus had but a hundred eyes, it has a thousand, and it does not permit its alertness to be imposed upon. We will find Don Andres, even if he is in the nethermost hell. I will put two agents at work on the affair, the sharpest sleuths that ever followed a scent, Argamasilla and Covachuelo, and in twenty-four hours we shall know what has happened."

Don Geronimo expressed his thanks, saluted the official, and went away full of confidence. He returned home and narrated to his daughter the interview he had had with the police authority, but she did not for a moment dream that the *manolo* wounded in Calle del Povar could be her fiancé.

Feliciana mourned the loss of her *novia* with the self-control of a well-born demoiselle; for it would be quite improper for a young lady to appear to indulge in too keen a regret for a young man. From time to time, she applied a lace-trimmed handkerchief to wipe away a tear that slowly gathered in the corner of her eye. The neglected duets were lying in melancholy abandonment on the closed piano,—a sign of extreme mental prostration in Feliciana's case. Don Geronimo awaited with impatience the expiration of the twenty-four hours when he would see the triumphant report made by Covachuelo and Argamasilla.

The two clever agents first repaired to Don Andres's house and adroitly induced the servants to talk about their master's habits. They ascertained that Don Andres partook of chocolate every morning, enjoyed a siesta at noon, dressed at three o'clock, visited Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios, dined at six, and returned home about midnight, after the promenade or the play, all of which caused the two sleuths much profound reflection. They knew further that on leaving home Andres had gone down Calle d'Alcala as far as Calle de Peligros: this detail of consummate importance was furnished them by an Asturian porter who was constantly stationed before the door.

They betook themselves to Calle de Peligros and discovered positively that Andres had been there two evenings previously,



shortly after six; the strongest inferences justified the belief that he had taken his way through Calle de la Cruz.

This important result secured, and wearied by the great exertions that had been necessary to obtain it, they entered an *ermitage*,—such is the name applied to wineshops in Madrid,—and commenced a game of cards while enjoying a bottle of Manzanilla. The game lasted all night.

After a brief slumber, they resumed their inquiries and succeeded in tracing Andres to the neighborhood of the Rastro; there, they lost the trail: no one could furnish them with any information respecting the young man in the black redingote, yellow piqué waistcoat, and white trousers. Disappearance complete! Everybody had seen him go there, no one had seen him return—— They knew not what to think. Andres could not have been smuggled away in broad daylight in the most densely-peopled quarters of Madrid; unless a trap had been opened under his feet and immediately closed, no explanation could be adduced for his disappearance.

They wandered about in the vicinity of the Rastro for a long time and questioned divers dealers, but could elicit no further information. They made inquiries at the very store at which Andres had metamorphosed himself; but they were received by the dealer's wife, while the clothes had been sold by her husband: she could afford them no information, and, besides, she could not comprehend their meaning from the ambiguous questions put to her; from their evil countenances, she regarded them as thieves, although they were just the reverse, and, finally, she shut the door in their faces ill-temperedly, while carefully watching to see that nothing was taken away.

Such was the result of one day's work. Don Geronimo returned to the police official, who gravely announced that they were on the traces of the guilty parties, but that matters must not be endangered by too much haste. The good man, in a cheerful mood, repeated the reply of the official to Feliciana, who raised her eyes to heaven, sighed, and thought she did not express herself too strongly under the circumstances by saying: "Poor Andres!"

A strange circumstance transpired to complicate this mysterious affair. A young rascal of about fifteen had left at Andres's house a tolerably bulky package, and slipped away hastily with the remark: "To be given to Señor Salcedo."

This apparently very simple remark seemed a piece of devilish irony when the package was opened.

It enclosed, guess what?—the black redingote, the yellow piqué waistcoat, and the white trousers belonging to the unfortunate Andres, together with his smart polished shoes with red morocco tops. The sarcastic stroke was completed by including his Parisian gloves neatly rolled one in the other.

At this strange and unexampled fact in the history of crime, Argamasilla and Covachuelo were stupefied: one raised his arms to heaven, the other dropped them supinely over his hips in an attitude expressive of absolute discouragement; the first said: *O tempora!* the second: *O mores!*

Let no one be surprised to hear two alguazils speak Latin. Argamasilla had studied theology; Covachuelo, law; but they had suffered misfortune. Who has not?

To send the victim's clothes back to his domicile, very neatly folded and tied up, what was it but an act of rare,

refined perversity? To add raillery to crime, what a grand text for the law officer!

The inspection of the clothes, however, only served to intensify the sleuths' difficulties.

The cloth of the redingote was entirely free from damage; not a hole, round or triangular, indicated the passage of bullet or blade. Perhaps the victim had been strangled. In that case, there would have been a struggle; the waistcoat and trousers would not have preserved their fresh appearance; they would have been twisted, ripped, torn; it was not conceivable that Andres de Salcedo had carefully undressed himself before the perpetration of the crime and presented himself bare-bodied to the assassins' poniards in order to spare his clothing: that would have been too trivial!

There was enough in the matter, truly, to puzzle stronger heads than those of Argamasilla and Covachuelo.

Covachuelo, who was the more logical of the pair, after having buried his head in his hands for a full quarter of an hour in order to prevent his masterly brow from bursting under the pressure of his intense meditation, gave voice to this victorious suggestion:

"If Señor Andres is not dead, he must be alive, for these are man's only two states of existence; I do not know of a third."

Argamasilla nodded in token of assent.

"If he is alive, and I am persuaded he is, he shouldn't be going about without clothes, *more ferarum*. He had no parcel when he left home; and since his clothes are here, he must necessarily have bought others, for it is not to be

conceived that in the present state of advanced civilization a man will content himself with the raiment of Adam."

Argamasilla's eyes started from their sockets as he listened with profound attention to the reasoning of his friend Covachuelo.

"I do not think that Don Andres would have prepared in advance the clothes which he was to put on later in some house in the quarter where we lost trace of him; he must have bought apparel at some second-hand store, after having sent home his own clothes."

"You are a genius, a very god," said Argamasilla as he clasped Covachuelo to his heart; "let me embrace you; from this day, I am no longer your friend, but your disciple, your dog, your Mameluke. Command me, great man, I will follow you everywhere. Ah! if the government were but just, instead of being a mere agent of police, you would be political head in the most important cities in the kingdom. But governments are never just!"

"We will search the shops of all the second-hand clothes-dealers and all the tailors' stores throughout the city; we will examine their sales' books, and, by this means, we shall gain fresh information concerning Señor Salcedo. If the porter had only thought of arresting or having arrested the *muchacho* who brought the package, we should have learned through him who sent it and whence it came. But people who are not in the business think of nothing, and no one could have foreseen this incident. Come, let's be off, Argamasilla: do you look up the tailors in Calle Mayor; I will interrogate the clothes-dealers of the Rastro."

After a few hours, the two friends reported to the alcade.

Argamasilla minutely, but briefly, announced the result of his inquiries. An individual habited in the apparel of a *majo*, and apparently greatly agitated, had purchased at the establishment of one of the principal master-tailors located under the pillars of the Calle Mayor a frock-coat and black trousers, and—a clear sign of great mental perturbation—without questioning the price he paid.

Covachuelo reported that a dealer in the Rastro had sold a *manolo's* jacket, waistcoat, and sash to a man wearing a black redingote and white trousers, who in all likelihood was no other than Don Andres de Salcedo in person.

Both had changed their garments in the back-shop, and went forth clothed in their new suits, which, considering the respective social ranks to which they belonged, were certainly disguises. What could have been the object of a man of fashion assuming the jacket of a *majo*, on the same day, almost at the same hour, as a *majo* donning the frock-coat of a man of fashion? That question was beyond the capacity of sub-alterns like poor Argamasilla and Covachuelo, but which the lofty intelligence of the magistrate before whom they had the honor of speaking would infallibly solve.

As for them, in the absence of better light, they considered that this mysterious vanishing, this strange coincidence of disguises, and the return of the garments as if in the nature of a challenge, must be attributed to some vast conspiracy having in view the placing of Espartero or the Conde de Montemolin on the throne. Disguised in such a manner, the conspirators had doubtless gone to Aragon or Catalonia to

join some embryo Carlist body, or some guerilla bands that were endeavoring to effect a reorganization. Spain was dancing over a volcano; but if the authorities would grant them a fee, Argamasilla and Covachuelo would themselves undertake to quench the fires of this volcano, prevent the suspects from joining their accomplices, and within a week furnish a list of the conspirators and the plans of their undertaking.

The alcade listened to this remarkable report with all the attention that it deserved, and said to the two agents:

"Have you any information as to the proceedings of these two persons subsequent to their mutual disguises?"

"The *majo*, in the dress of an elegant, went to promenade on the salon of the Prado, entered the Teatro del Circo, and took an ice at the Café de la Bourse," replied Argamasilla.

"The man of fashion, dressed as a *majo*, took several turns on the Plaza de Lavapiés and in the streets adjacent, lounging about and ogling the *manolas* at the windows, then he drank an iced lemonade in an *orchateria de chufas*," deposed Covachuelo.

"Each assumed the character befitting his costume: profound dissimulation, devilish shrewdness," said the alcade; "one wished to make himself popular, and probe the minds of the lower class; the other desired to assure the upper class of the sympathy and co-operation of the masses. But we're in it, we will watch the hatching of the plot! We will catch you red-handed, my fine conspirators, Carlists or Ayacuchos, Progressists or Conservatives. Ha! ha! Argus had a hundred eyes, but the police have a thousand that never slumber."

This was the worthy man's refrain, his hobby-horse, his *Lilla Burello*. He rightly judged that it triumphantly took the place of an idea, when an idea failed him.

"Argamasilla and Covachuelo, you shall have your fee. But don't you know what became of your two criminals—for such they are—after their goings and comings necessitated by their dangerous schemes?"

"We do not know; for it was already growing dark, and as we could only glean the testimony of eye-witnesses and but few details concerning their outward and past proceedings, we lost trace of them from that night."

"The deuce! that is annoying," said the alcade.

"Oh! we will find the trail again!" exclaimed the two friends enthusiastically.

Don Geronimo returned during the day to ascertain if there were any news.

The magistrate received him curtly; and Don Geronimo Vasquez becoming embarrassed by his apologies and begging to be excused for his importunity, the official said:

"You should not by any means interest yourself so openly in Don Andres de Salcedo; he is involved in a deep plot which we are observing with the intention of laying our hands on all the threads."

"What! Andres a conspirator!" exclaimed Don Geronimo; "Andres!"

"He!" replied the official in a peremptory tone.

"So pleasant a fellow, so quiet, cheerful, and inoffensive!"

"He feigned pleasantness, as Brutus feigned madness; a method of concealing his game and diverting observation.



We know that, we old foxes. The best thing that could happen to him would be that he be not discovered. For his sake, you should hope for that."

Poor Geronimo withdrew, much abashed and very much ashamed of his want of perspicacity. He who had known Andres from the cradle and had danced him on his knees when a tiny little fellow, had not the shadow of a suspicion that he had welcomed to his house so dangerous a conspirator. His admiration for the fearful sagacity of the police was blended with terror,—the police who in so short a time had discovered a secret that he had never even suspected, although he saw the culprit every day and had so little understood him as to desire him as his son-in-law.

Feliciana's astonishment was at its height when she learned that she had been wooed so assiduously by the head of a far-reaching Carlist plot. What strength of character Don Andres must have possessed to have kept in the background all evidences of his absorbing political preoccupation, and to sing with so much self-control Bellini's duets! Distrust then, after that, a calm manner, peaceful air, serene glance, and smiling mouth! Who would have said that Andres, who never showed any keen interest in aught but bull-fights, and seemed to hold no other opinion than his preference of Sevilla to Rodriguez, Chiclanero to Arjona, concealed such profound thoughts beneath this apparent frivolousness?

The two agents applied themselves to further discoveries, and ascertained that the wounded young man whom Militona cared for was the one who had purchased the clothes at the Rastro. The report of the watchman and that of the clothes

dealer coincided exactly. Jacket of chocolate color, blue waistcoat, red belt, there was nothing to be mistaken about.

This fact somewhat upset the hopes entertained by Argamasilla and Covachuelo touching the conspiracy. Andres's disappearance would have suited them better. The affair took on the aspect of a mere love-intrigue, a rivals' common quarrel, a murder pure and simple, a most trifling affair, in fact. The neighbors had heard the serenade, all was cleared up.

Covachuelo said, with a sigh :

"I have never been lucky."

Argamasilla answered in a tearful tone :

"I was born under a malignant planet."

Poor friends ! to scent a vast conspiracy and to lay their hands on a wretched little quarrel accompanied by only a serious wound ! It was heart-breaking.

Let us now return to Juancho, whom we left after his duel with the knife with Andres. An hour later, with stealthy step, he returned to the scene of the combat, and, to his great astonishment, could not find the body of his antagonist at the spot where he was certain he had seen it fall. Had his adversary risen and dragged himself away in the convulsions caused by his pains ? Had he been taken up by the watchmen ? This was what he could not learn. Should he remain, or take to his heels ? His flight would bring suspicion upon him, and, moreover, the notion of taking himself away from Militona, of leaving her free to yield to her own fancy, was unbearable to his jealous nature. The night was dark, the street deserted, no one had seen him ; who, then, could accuse him ?

The struggle had lasted long enough for his adversary to recognize him ; for toreros, like actors, have well-known faces, and unless he died immediately, as might be expected, perhaps he had accused him. Juancho, who was in rather a delicate position with the police owing to his lively experiences with the knife, ran great risk, in case of arrest, of spending a few summers in the Spanish possessions in Africa,—at Ceuta or Melilla.

He therefore went home, brought his Cordovan horse into the court-yard, threw a striped blanket over him, and disappeared at a gallop.

If a painter had seen this sturdy horseman passing through the streets pressing this splendid animal's ribs closely with his knees, as it flew along with mane floating, tail outspread, and striking the sparks from the uneven paving, at a pace so rapid that his shadow could hardly keep pace with him on the whitened walls he skirted,—if a painter had seen all this, he might have produced a powerful picture ; for this noisy career through the silent streets, this hasty dash in the peaceful night, was a drama in itself : but the painters were abed.

Soon he had reached the Caravanchel route, crossed the Puente de Segovia, and dashed off at a break-neck speed into the dark and gloomy country.

He was already more than four leagues from Madrid, when the thought of Militona took such powerful hold upon him that he felt unable to proceed farther. He feared his stroke had not been effectively dealt, and that his rival might have received only a slight wound ; he pictured him cured

and at the knees of Militona, who bestowed her smiles on him.

A cold sweat broke out on his brow ; his jaws became so firmly set that he could not separate them ; his knees convulsively pressed the flank of his horse, so that the noble animal's ribs yielded, his breathing failed, and he stopped suddenly. Juancho suffered as if red-hot needles had been thrust into his heart.

He turned about and returned to the city with the speed of a hurricane. When he arrived, his black horse was white with foam. Three o'clock had just struck ; Juancho hurried to the Calle del Povar. Militona's lamp shone still, a chaste and quivering star in the angle of an old wall. The torero strove to force open the door at the alley ; but, spite of his extraordinary strength, he could not succeed. Militona had carefully barred the door from inside. Juancho returned home, crushed and miserable enough to arouse pity, and in a most dreadful state of uncertainty ; for he had seen two shadows projected on Militona's curtain. He had, therefore, been victimized !

When daylight came, the torero, closely wrapped in his cape, with his hat pulled over his eyes, returned to the neighborhood of the fight in order to ascertain the versions current concerning the affair ; he learned that the young man was not dead, and that, as he had been pronounced unfit to be removed, he occupied Militona's chamber, as she had consented to receive him, an act of charity that the gossips of the quarter praised most highly. In spite of his robust frame, he felt his knees totter, and was obliged to lean against the wall ;

his rival was in Militona's chamber, and resting in her bed ! Hell's extremest pains could not have furnished more horrible torture for him.

Taking a final decision, he entered the house and commenced the ascent of the stairway with a heavier and more foreboding step than that of the Commander's statue.

## VII

When Juancho reached the first landing, he stopped like one petrified, he tottered, distracted ; he dreaded himself, and was afraid of what was about to happen. A hundred thousand ideas crossed his mind in a single moment. Should he be satisfied to trample on his rival, and force him to yield the detested breath that still remained in him ? Should he kill Militona, or set the house on fire ? He was floundering in a sea of plans that were horrible, mad, and tempestuous. For a moment, reason flashed upon him, and he was about to go down again, and had already made a half-turn, but jealousy once more plunged its empoisoned thorn in his heart, and he reascended the rough stairway.

Without question, it would have been hard to find a more vigorous nature than Juancho's : a neck as round as a column and as strong as a tower united his powerful head to his athletic shoulders ; nerves of steel interlaced themselves in his redoubtable arms ; his chest would have resisted the marble frames of the gladiators of old ; with one hand he could have plucked out a bull's horn ; and yet the violence of his mental

suffering crushed all this physical power. Sweat bathed his temples, his legs gave way, the blood surged to his head in mad waves, and flames passed before his eyes. Several times he was obliged to cling to the hand-rail to avoid falling and rolling across the staircase like an inert body, so violently was his soul tortured.

At each step, he repeated, gnashing his teeth like a wild beast :

“In her chamber!—— In her chamber!——” He had drawn his long Albacete knife from his girdle and opened and shut it mechanically, as he spoke.

At last, he reached the door, and, holding his breath, he listened.

All was still within the room, and Juancho heard naught but the rapidly-coursing blood in his arteries, and the dull beating of his heart.

What was passing in that silent chamber, behind that door, the weak rampart that separated him from his enemy? Militona, full of compassion and tenderly solicitous, was doubtless leaning over the wounded man's bed, observing his slumber and soothing his pain.

“Oh!” he thought, “had I known that to please and soften you it needed only a knife-thrust in the breast, I would not have given it to him, but to myself; in that deadly conflict I would purposely have exposed myself that I might fall dying before your house. But me you would have allowed to writhe in pain on the pavement and without giving me succor. I am not a pretty gentleman with white gloves and tight-fitting redingote.”

This thought rekindled his rage, and he knocked violently.

Andres trembled on his bed of pain ; Militona, who was seated near it, rose rigid and pale, as if she had been moved by a spring ; the old Aldonza turned green, and made the sign of the cross as she kissed her thumb.

The knock was so short, heavy, and imperious that there was nothing left but to open the door. A similar knock would have thrown the door into the room.

The knocking resembled that of the marble guests, the spectres that cannot be dismissed, all the fateful beings that attend catastrophes : Vengeance with her dagger, Justice with her sword.

Old Aldonza opened the wicket with a trembling hand, and, looking through the square aperture, saw Juancho's face.

Medusa's head, wan amid her viperine and green-hued locks, could not have more terribly affected the poor old creature ; she wished to cry out, but no sound could escape from her parched throat ; she stood with outspread fingers, eye-balls fixed, mouth open, and her rising cries frozen, as if she had been changed to stone.

In truth, the torero's face framed by the grill was not reassuring : a red circle surrounded his eyes ; his complexion was livid, and his cheek-bones, from which the blood had fled, appeared as two white spots in the midst of his pallid cheeks ; his dilated nostrils quivered like those of a wild beast scenting his prey ; his teeth had left their imprint on his swollen lips. Jealousy, rage, and revenge were at war in that troubled countenance.



"Notre Dame d'Almudela," muttered the old woman, "if you will rescue us from this danger, I will say neuvaines to you and give you a festooned taper with a velvet holder."

Full of courage as he was, Andres felt that uneasiness which the bravest men feel in the presence of a peril against which they are defenceless; he mechanically put out his hand as if to seek some weapon.

Finding that the door was not opened, Juancho pressed against it with his shoulder: the boards creaked, and the plaster fell away from the hinges and the lock.

Militona, placing herself before Andres, said in a firm, calm voice to the old woman, who was crazed with terror:

"Aldonza, open the door; I desire it."

Aldonza slipped back the bolt, and, placing herself against the wall, she threw open the door so as to shelter her, in the same way as the keeper does when he admits the tiger into the arena, or the attendant of the toril releasing a Gaviria or Colmenar bull.

Juancho, who expected greater resistance, entered slowly, somewhat disconcerted by the absence of obstacles. But a single glance at Andres lying on Militona's bed sufficed to reawaken his fury.

He seized the panel of the door, to which Aldonza clung with all her force, believing her last hour had come, and shut it, spite of all the poor woman's efforts; then he leaned against the wall, and crossed his arms upon his chest.

"Great God!" murmured the old woman, whose teeth chattered, "he is going to massacre all three of us. Suppose I call out of the window for aid?"

She had taken a step in this direction, when Juancho, divining her intention, seized her by the skirt of her dress and with a rapid movement forced her back against the wall again, minus a piece of her skirt.

"Witch, don't make a sound, or I will wring your neck like a chicken's, and send your old soul to the devil! Don't stand between me and the object of my rage, or I will crush you as I go to him."

As he spoke thus, he pointed to Andres, who, weak and pale, was endeavoring to raise his head from the pillow.

The situation was terrible; this scene had not been accompanied by any sound that could alarm the neighbors, who, moreover, having a wholesome dread of the awe-inspiring Juancho, would rather have shut themselves within their own domiciles than intermeddle in such a wrangle; to seek the police or armed force would entail much delay, and, besides, it would be necessary to notify some one of the neighbors, inasmuch as it was impossible even to think of leaving the dreadful room.

Hence poor Andres, already stabbed once, weakened by loss of blood, without weapons, and, still more, unable to make use of them even if he had them, burdened with bandages and coverings, was at the mercy of a brutal fellow mad with jealousy and rage, and no human means could defend him; and all, too, because he had looked at the face of a pretty *manola* at the bull-fight. It may be believed that at this moment he regretted the piano, the refreshing tea, and the prosaic customs of civilized society. Nevertheless, he cast a pleading glance at Militona as if beseeching her not to enter

on a fruitless struggle, and was so struck with her radiant beauty, all pale as she was from fear, that he did not regret having known her even at the price he had paid.

She stood with one hand resting on the edge of the bed on which Andres lay, as if she would defend him, the other pointing to the door, in an attitude of supreme majesty, and said in a voice that quivered with emotion :

“What have you come here for, murderer? In this chamber, where you expect to find a lover, there is but a wounded man ! retire instantly. Are you not afraid that the wound will bleed afresh in your presence? Is it not enough to kill, must you *assassinate* also ?”

The young woman uttered the word *assassinate* with an accent so strange, and accompanied it with such a searching glance, that Juancho was disconcerted, and grew red and pale alternately, while the ferocious aspect of his features assumed a troubled expression. After a pause, he said in a broken voice :

“Swear to me on the relics of Monte Sagrado and on the image of Notre Dame del Pilar, by your heroic father’s memory, and your saintly mother’s, that you do not love this young man, and I will at once leave !”

Andres anxiously awaited Militona’s reply.

She made no answer.

Her long black eyelashes drooped upon her cheeks, which assumed an almost imperceptible flush.

Although this silence might be equivalent to a sentence of death for Andres, who anxiously looked for Militona’s response, he felt his heart filled with an indescribable satisfaction.

"If you will not swear," continued Juancho, "simply affirm it; I will believe you; you have never lied; but you are silent, and I must kill him——" He advanced toward the bed with his knife open. "You love him!"

"Well, yes," cried the girl, with flashing eyes and quivering voice, the expression of sublime anger. "If he must die for my sake, he shall at least know that he is loved; he shall take that word with him to the tomb, it shall be his reward and your punishment."

At one bound, Juancho placed himself at Militona's side, and seized her arm violently.

"Do not repeat what you have just spoken, or I will not answer for my conduct, and I will fling you, with my *navaja* struck to your heart, on this darling's body."

"What does it matter to me?" said the heroic girl. "Think you that I will live, if he dies?"

Andres, by an extraordinary effort, sat up. He attempted to cry out: a pink froth rose to his lips; his wound had reopened. He fell back in a swoon on his pillow.

"If you don't leave this room," said Militona, seeing what had befallen Andres, "I shall consider you a vile, infamous coward; I shall believe that you might have saved Dominguez, when the bull knelt on his breast, and that you did not do it because you were basely jealous."

"Militona! Militona! you have the right to hate me, although never did man love woman as I love you; but you have not the right to despise me. Nothing could have rescued Dominguez from death!"

"If I am not to regard you as an assassin, go at once!"

“Yes, I will await his recovery,” replied Juancho in a threatening tone; “take good care of him! I have sworn that, so long as I live, you shall belong to no other than me!”

During this discussion, the old woman, half-opening the door, had given the alarm to the neighbors and demanded assistance.

Five or six men threw themselves on Juancho, who left the room with a group of *muchachos* clinging to him; he shook them off and threw them against the walls as a bull does the dogs, without their being able to bite or stay him in his career.

Then he went off at a quiet pace, and disappeared in the maze of streets surrounding Plaza de Lavapiès.

This scene aggravated Andres's condition, so that he was seized with a violent fever, and raved the whole day, throughout the night, and the entire following day. Militona watched over him with the most tender and solicitous care.

Meanwhile, Argamasilla and Covachuelo, as we have already narrated, had, by virtue of their industrious inquiries, succeeded in ascertaining that the wounded *manolo* of Calle del Povar was no other than Señor de Salcedo, and the alcade of the quarter had written to Don Geronimo informing him that the young man in whom he was interested had been found in the house of a *manola* of Lavapiès, who had sheltered him half-dead before her door, and clothed, no one knew why, in the costume of a *majo*.

At this news, Feliciano debated with herself as to the propriety of a young fiancée's visiting her dangerously-wounded lover in the company of her father or a kinswoman of venerable age. Was there not something alarming in a well-bred

young woman seeing a man in bed prematurely? Although rendered a chaste action by the sanctity of illness, ought not a modest maiden to deny herself such a sight? Yet, if Andres should think himself neglected and die of grief! This would indeed be sad.

"Father," said Feliciana, "we must go to see poor Andres."

"Certainly, my child," the good man answered, "I was about to suggest it."

## VIII

Thanks to the vigor of his constitution and to Militona's excellent care, Andres was soon in a fair way toward recovery: he could converse and sit up for a short time; and he was able to appreciate his condition, which was certainly somewhat embarrassing.

He assumed that his disappearance must have given great uneasiness to Feliciana, Don Geronimo, and his other friends, and he reproached himself for not having put an end to their anxiety; yet he hardly cared to make known to his *novia* that he was in a pretty girl's chamber, on whose account he had received a gash from a *navaja*. This confession was a troublesome one to make, yet it could not be avoided.

The adventure had taken on a character that he had no intention to accord to it at the outset; it was only to have been a slight intrigue with a young girl of little consequence. Militona's courage and devotion had changed the whole aspect of

the affair. What would she say when she learned that Andres had plighted his troth to another? The wounded man could better endure Felician's anger than Militona's grief. In the eyes of the one, it was a mere *impropriety*; to the other, it meant despair. Should that confession of love, so nobly uttered, in the moment of extreme peril, have such a recompense? Was he not bound to protect that young girl henceforth from Juancho's wrath? for he might resume his violent conduct toward her.

Andres reasoned thus and in many other ways; while reflecting, he watched Militona, who was busily employed in some handiwork while sitting near the window; she had resumed her busy life as soon as the first anxious moments had passed.

A warm, pure light seemed to caress her and quivered in bluish gleams on the tresses of her magnificent hair, which was coiled at the back of her head; a carnation near her brow seemed like a red star against her ebon locks. She looked charming thus. A patch of blue sky, on which the foliage of the pot of basil whose companion had been thrown into the street on the evening when the note was flung to Andres stood out in relief, served as a background for her lovely head.

The cricket and the quail alternately chirped their notes, and a light breeze catching the odor of the plant, wafted a faint but sweet perfume into the chamber.

This interior, with its white walls on which some coarsely-colored, popular prints hung, lighted up by Militona's presence, strongly charmed Andres. This chaste indigence and



virginal bareness were pleasing to his mind; the innocent, yet proud, poverty appealed to his poetic instinct. How little, then, was necessary to the life of a charming creature!

As he compared this simple room with Felician's pretentious and vulgarly-furnished apartments, Andres was impressed with the idea that his fiancée's clock, curtains, statuettes, and small glass dogs were even more ridiculous than he had before considered them.

A silver-toned ringing was heard in the street. It came from a flock of goats which were passing, and tinkling their little bells.

"There comes my breakfast," said Militona merrily, as she placed her work on the table; "I must go down and stop it on the way; I shall take a larger pitcher to-day, as there are two of us, and the doctor permits you to eat something."

"You will not find me a difficult guest to feed," Andres answered, with a smile.

"Bah! the appetite comes with eating, when the bread is white and the milk is pure; and my dealer never deceives me."

As she said this, she went off humming a couplet from an old ballad. After a few minutes, she returned with rosy cheeks, and breathing loudly from the rapid ascent she had made of the rough stairway; she bore a bowl full of frothing milk in the palm of her hand.

"I hope, señor, that I have not left you long alone. Twenty-four steps to descend and, worst of all, to remount!"

"You are as light and quick as a bird. Just now this dark staircase resembled Jacob's ladder."

"Why?" asked Militona, with the most perfect simplicity, not suspecting that a compliment was intended for her.

"Because an angel descended it," Andres answered, at the same time drawing one of Militona's hands to his lips, as she divided the milk into two portions.

"Nonsense, flatterer, eat and drink what is put before you; if you called me an archangel, you would not get any more."

She offered him a brown cup half full, and a small piece of the delicious and compact, dazzlingly white bread peculiar to Spain.

"You are on slender fare, my poor friend; but since you have assumed the garb of the common people, you must make up your mind to eat such a breakfast as he would whose costume you wear; that will teach you to disguise yourself."

As she spoke thus, she blew off the light froth that crowned her cup and sipped the beverage. A pretty little white line was traced above her rosy lip by the milk.

"Now that you are allowed to talk," she said, "it will be a good time to inform me why you, whom I met at the Plaza de los Toros, in a smart, tight-fitting redingote, dressed in the latest Paris fashion, should be found by me before my door in the dress of a *manolo*. Where did you assume a disguise? Here, or yonder? Although I am not familiar with the fashionable world, I think the style in which I first saw you was your true one. Your small white hands would prove that."

"You are right, Militona; the longing I had to see you again, and the fear of putting you in peril, induced me to

adopt this jacket, sash, and hat ; my usual dress would have drawn attention to me too surely in this quarter. In the other costume, I was only a shadow in the crowd, where no eye but that of jealousy could recognize me."

"And that of love," said Militona, blushing. "Your disguise did not deceive me for a moment. I should have supposed that the observation I made to you at the Circo would have checked you, as I desired, for I foresaw what has happened, and yet I should have been vexed had I been too closely obeyed."

"Will you allow me to ask you a few questions respecting that terrible Juancho?"

"Did I not tell you, at the point of his knife, that I love you? Did I not then answer you everything in advance?" the young girl replied, looking at Andres with eyes beaming with innocence and brow radiant with sincerity.

Every doubt that might have arisen in his mind concerning the connection between the torero and the young girl vanished like a light mist.

"Still, if it will afford you any pleasure, my dear invalid, I will tell you my story and his in a few words.—To begin with myself. My father, an unknown soldier, was killed during the civil war while fighting like a hero for the cause which he considered the just one. His noble deeds would have been sung by the poets, if, instead of having had as the theatre of his exploits a narrow mountain gorge in one of the chains of Aragon, he had acquitted himself on some famous battle-field. My worthy mother could not survive the

loss of an adored husband, and at thirteen I was left an orphan with no other relative than Aldonza, who, poor herself, could be of little help to me.

“However, as I need but little, I have lived by the labor of my hands under the indulgent sky of Spain, which nourishes its children with sunshine and light; my chief expense was to go each Monday to see the bull-fights; for women of my rank have not, like the young ladies of fashionable society, such pleasures as reading, the piano, the theatre, and soirées, and we love those simple and grand spectacles in which man’s courage prevails over the blind fury of the brute. It was there that Juancho saw me and conceived a mad love for me, a frenzied passion. Notwithstanding his manly beauty, his splendid costumes, and his superhuman exploits, he never inspired me.—All that he did failed to touch me; in fact, it but increased my aversion to him.

“Such was his adoration of me, however, that I often felt myself ungrateful for not responding to his love; but love is not subject to our will: God directs it to us when it seems good to Him. Seeing that I did not love him, Juancho became suspicious and jealous; he beset me with his attentions, he kept watch over me, spied on me, and was always looking for imaginary rivals: I was obliged to keep strict watch over my words and glances: a look, a remark, was sufficient ground for Juancho to enter on some frightful quarrel; he surrounded me with solitude and a girdle of terror that none dared to cross.”

“Which I have broken forever, I hope; for I do not think Juancho will return now.”

"Not very soon, at any rate, for he will have to avoid pursuit until you have recovered. But you, who are you? it is time to ask that question, is it not?"

"Andres de Salcedo is my name. I am possessed of sufficient fortune to have to do only what appears to me becoming, and am not dependent on any one in the world."

"And you have no lovely *novia*, wealthy and richly dressed?" asked Militona, with mingled curiosity and uneasiness.

Andres did not like to lie; but the truth was hard to tell, so he replied vaguely.

Militona did not press the question, but she paled somewhat, and became pensive.

"Could you furnish me with a pen and a sheet of paper? I should like to write to some friends whom my absence must make uneasy, and to reassure them as to my condition."

The young girl succeeded in finding, at the bottom of a drawer, an old sheet of letter-paper, a bent pen, and an ink-stand in which the dried ink seemed like a coat of lacquer.

A few drops of water restored its primitive fluidity to the black mud, and Andres was able to scrawl the following note, on his knees, addressed to Don Geronimo Vasquez de los Rios:

"MY FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW:

"Do not be uneasy about my absence; an accident that will have no serious consequences detains me for a short time in the house where I have been received. I hope, in a few days, to be able to lay my respects at the feet of Doña Feliciana.

"ANDRES DE SALCEDO."

This tolerably Machiavelian letter did not give the address of the house, or state anything definitely, leaving the way open for the writer to give the necessary color to the circumstances later; it would be sufficient to quiet the fears of the good man and Feliciano, and to gain time for Andres, who did not know that Geronimo had been so well informed, thanks to the sagacity of Argamasilla and Covachuelo.

Aunt Aldonza took the letter to the post, and Andres, satisfied as to that matter, unreservedly yielded himself to the poetic and sweet sensations that were inspired by that poor chamber which Militona's presence endowed with such fulness of riches.

He experienced that abundance and purity of joy flowing from true love that does not spring from social conventionality, in which the flatteries of self-love, the pride of conquest, and the chimeras born of imagination have no place,—that love which takes its source in the happy union of youth, beauty, and innocence: a sublime trinity.

Militona's unlooked-for confession should—according to the dictum of the elegants who partake of love as they would an ice, in small spoonfuls, and, to relish it better, wait until it melts—have robbed Andres of many shades and charming variations by its uncultivated brusqueness. A woman in society would have taken six months to prepare the way for this effect; but Militona was not of the fashionable class.

Don Geronimo received the letter from Andres, and, taking it to his daughter, said to her, with a joyful air:

“See, Feliciano, here is a letter from your fiancé.”

## IX

Feliciana, with a decidedly disdainful air, took the paper her father offered her, and, observing that it was unglazed, said :

“A letter without an envelope, and fastened with a wafer ! What a lack of good-breeding ! but one must make some allowances for the exigence of the situation. Poor Andres ! what, not even a sheet of Victoria letter-paper ! not even a stick of Alcroft’s Regent’s Quadrant sealing-wax ! What an unfortunate plight he must be in ! Was there ever such a cabbage-leaf as that, Sir Edwards ? ” she added, as she passed the letter, after reading it, to the young gentleman from the Prado, who had been a frequent visitor at the house since Andres had disappeared.

“Ho ! ” cackled the amiable islander with difficulty, “the Australian savages do better than that ! it is the output of the dawn of manufacture ; in London, this rag of paper would not be used for wrapping up tallow-candles.”

“Speak English, Sir Edwards,” said Feliciana ; “you know I am familiar with that language.”

“No ! I prefer to improve myself in the Spanish, which, moreover, is your own language.”

This gallantry made Feliciana smile. Sir Edwards was very pleasant in her eyes. He came nearer her standard of elegance and suitability than Andres. If not the most civil of men, he was at least the most civilized. All that he wore was fashioned in the newest and most perfect style. Every article of his clothing was made under a patent of invention,



and of materials proof against water and fire. He had pen-knives that were multiple articles combining razors, corkscrews, spoons, forks, and drinking-cups; combination match-boxes, tapers, inkstands, seals and sealing-wax; canes which could be converted into chairs, parasols, a stake for a tent, or, at a pinch, even into a pirogue, and a thousand other inventions of a similar kind, enclosed in an endless number of boxes with compartments, which the sons of perfidious Albion—the people who require more articles than any other to enable them to live—cart with them from the North Pole to the Equator.

If Feliciana could have seen the toilet-table of this young aristocrat, she would have been entirely vanquished. The instrument-cases of a surgeon, a dentist, and a chiropodist would not together furnish a greater store of steel articles of strange and terrifying form. Andres, notwithstanding his attempts at *high-life*, had always fallen far short of these exalted results.

“Father, if we should pay a visit to our dear Andres, Sir Edwards should accompany us; it would be less formal, for, although I am his fiancée, going to see a young man offends the proprieties, or, at the least, clashes with them.”

“Seeing that I should be present with Sir Edwards, what harm could there be?” responded Geronimo, who could not help thinking his daughter somewhat prudish. “If, however, you think it would be out of place for you to see Don Andres, I will go alone, and report faithfully to you concerning him.”

“One must make some sacrifice for those one loves,” said Feliciana, who was not indisposed to see for herself how affairs stood.

Señorita Vasquez, although she was very well bred, was nevertheless a woman, and the knowledge that her fiancé, for whom, moreover, she felt only a very moderate passion, was at the house of a *manola* who was said to be pretty, disturbed her more than she would have been willing to confess, even to herself. The most arid female heart always has some fibre that lives and twinges when moved by self-love and jealousy.

Without very well knowing why, Feliciana made a very extravagant and, under the circumstances, unsuitable toilet; foreseeing a combat, she clothed herself from head to foot in the most invincible armor that the arsenal of her wardrobe could furnish, not that she, with her wealthy bourgeois disdain, could deem it possible that a simple *manola* could outvie her, but she had an instinctive desire to crush her by her splendid display, and compel the amorous admiration of Andres. She selected a straw-color *gros de Naples* hat, which intensified the dull effect of her blond hair and insipid face; a mantle of apple-green trimmed with white lace worn over a sky-blue gown; violet-colored shoes, and black thread gloves embroidered in blue. A rose-colored, lace-trimmed umbrella, and a bag made of heavy steel beads, completed her equipment.

Every dressmaker and lady's-maid would have said: "Señorita, you are ravishly dressed!"

When she cast a last glance at her cheval-glass, she smiled with a very contented air; never had she more nearly resembled the pattern doll of a subscriberless fashion journal.

Sir Edwards, who offered his arm to Feliciana, was not less exquisitely dressed; his narrow-brimmed hat, short-tailed coat,

odd plaid waistcoat, triangular-shaped shirt-collar, and cravat of satin, *improved moreen foundation*, furnished a fitting counterpart to the magnificence displayed by Don Geronimo's daughter.

Never had a better-matched couple walked side by side ; they were made for each other, and indulged in mutual admiration.

Calle del Povar was reached after many complaints by Feliciana about the wretched pavements, the narrowness of the streets, and the melancholy aspect of the buildings, all of which lamentations the young Englishman echoed while boasting of the broad sidewalks of flag-stone or asphalt and the desirable structures of his native city.

"What ! it was in front of this hovel that they picked up Señor de Salcedo disguised and wounded? What could he have been doing in this dreadful quarter?" asked Feliciana, with an air of disgust.

"To study the manners of the populace, or to try his skill with the knife, as, in London, I start a quarrel in the Temple or Cheapside in order to put in action some new ideas in boxing," said the young noble in his Hispano-British jargon.

"We shall soon know all about it," added Don Geronimo.

The three persons disappeared in the alley of the wretched house which Feliciana held in such contempt, but which, nevertheless, contained a treasure that would be too often vainly sought in superb mansions.

Feliciana gathered up her skirt most carefully in order to cross the alley. Had she known the Page hook, she would at this moment have fully appreciated the merits of this invention.

The stairway reached, she shuddered at the bare idea of placing her exquisitely fresh glove on the oily rope that served as a hand-rail, and entreated Sir Edwards to give her the support of his arm once more.

An officious female of the neighborhood led the way, and the dangerous ascent began.

When Don Geronimo had answered: *Gente de paz* (peaceful folks) to the terrified inquiry of old Aldonza, who was always in dread since Juancho's outrage, the door was opened, and Andres, already agitated by the accent of that well-known voice, saw Sir Edwards enter first as the advance-guard, then Don Geronimo, and lastly Feliciana, in the fabulous splendor of her bewilderingly coquettish toilet.

She had reserved herself for the final discharge of this unexpected pyrotechnic display, whether it were that she had an instinctive knowledge of graduated effects, or that she dreaded pouring suddenly into Andres's soul a happiness beyond his strength, or, again, that she deemed it might not have been proper to be the first to enter a chamber in which a young man was in bed.

Her entrance did not produce the startling effect she looked for. Not only was Andres not dazzled, or apparently overcome by a flood of the purest felicity, or bathed in tears of emotion at the idea of the superhuman sacrifice involved in the ascent of three flights of stairs just made on his account by so richly dressed a young woman; but, on the contrary, his face expressed clearly enough that he was annoyed.

The desired effect had completely failed. Militona had stood up on the appearance of these three persons, and offered

one of her chairs to Don Geronimo with the respectful deference that every modest young girl shows to an old man, and indicated by a sign to Aldonza that the other should be offered to Señora Vasquez.

The latter, after spreading out the skirt of her wonderful cerulean robe, as if afraid that it would be soiled, allowed herself to sink upon the second rush-seated chair, almost out of breath, and then fanned herself with her handkerchief.

"How high up it is! I thought I should never have had breath enough to reach here."

"La Señora was, doubtless, too tightly laced," said Militona in a perfectly innocent manner.

Now, Feliciana, although very slender, looked as if she had been laced with a windlass, and answered in the bitter-sweet tone that women know how to assume in such cases:

"I never lace tightly."

Assuredly, the business was opening badly, and the fashionable young lady had not the best of it.

Militona, in her black silk gown, in the Spanish style, with her pretty arms bare, and a blossom placed above her ear, made the studied elegance and luxuriousness of Feliciana's toilet appear still more ridiculous for its bad taste.

Señora Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios looked like an English lady's-maid in her Sunday clothes; Militona looked like a duchess who wished to preserve her *incognito*.

To repair her disadvantage, Don Geronimo's daughter endeavored to disconcert the *manola* by crushing her with a glance of supreme disdain; but her efforts were wasted, and

she ended by lowering her eyes before the working-girl's modest and frank gaze.

"Who is this woman, is she Andres's sister?" thought Militona. "Yet no, for she would resemble him; she would not have such an insolent air."

"Well, Andres!" said Geronimo, in a kindly tone, as he drew near the bed, "you have had a narrow escape! How are you now?"

"Tolerably well," answered Andres, "thanks to the excellent care of this young lady."

"Whom we will recompense for her trouble by some present," interrupted Feliciano, "a gold watch, a ring, or some other piece of jewelry she may select."

This benevolent remark was designed to overthrow the charming creature from the pedestal to which her beauty had raised her.

Thus provoked, Militona assumed such a queenly manner, and presented such a majestic appearance, that Señora Vasquez was completely abashed.

Edwards could not refrain from muttering: "She is a very pretty girl," forgetting that Feliciano understood English.

Andres replied tartly:

"Such services cannot be paid for."

"Oh! certainly not," remarked Geronimo. "Who talks of paying? it is simply a token of gratitude, a souvenir of acknowledgment, that's all."

"You must be very uncomfortably situated here, dear Andres," Señora Vasquez went on, as her eye took in all the shortcomings of the poor apartment.

“Señor has been kind enough not to complain,” observed Militona, as she moved toward the window, as if to give Feliciana a free course for her insolent remarks, and at the same time to say by her conduct: “You are in my house, I do not turn you out, I cannot; but set a limit to your insults, and to my patience as hostess.”

Feliciana began to feel embarrassed by her bearing, and tapped the toe of her shoe with the ivory tip of her umbrella.

There was a momentary silence.

Don Geronimo hunted in the corner of his snuff-box for a pinch of *polvo sevillano* (yellow snuff), which he carried to his worthy nose with an easy action that smacked of the good old times.

Sir Edwards, in order not to compromise himself, assumed an air of such well-imitated stupidity that one might readily believe it to be genuine.

Old Aldonza, with a fixed stare and open mouth, was rapturously admiring Feliciana's bewildering toilet: that creation of sky-blue, yellow rose, apple-green, and lilac plunged her into a state of artless amazement. Never had she seen such splendor at close quarters.

As to Andres, his glance rested on Militona with an expression of tender love and protection, as she stood at the other end of the room, radiant with beauty, and he felt astonished that he could ever have entertained the idea of marrying Feliciana, whom he now saw in her true colors: a mere artificial product of a boarding-school mistress and a gown-maker.

Militona's thoughts were:

“It is strange that I, who have never hated any one, should



have shuddered at the moment that woman entered this room, as if at the approach of an unknown enemy. What have I to fear? That Andres does not love her, I am sure; I read that clearly in his eyes. She is not pretty, certainly she is stupid, or else she would not have come to visit an invalid in such a poor house decked out as she is. A sky-blue gown and an apple-green cloak, what a lack of feeling! I detest her, the walking rushlight—— What did she come here for? To fish up her *novio* again; for she is doubtless some fiancée. Andres did not tell me of that.—Oh! if he should marry her, I should be most unhappy! But he will not marry her, it is impossible. She has horrible blond hair and freckles, and Andres told me that he liked only black hair and a uniform, pale complexion.”

While this monologue was proceeding, Feliciana was similarly employed. She was carefully examining Militona's beauty, earnestly hoping to find some blemish in it. To her great sorrow, she could find nothing to cavil at. Women, like poets, estimate themselves justly, and know their real strength, but they never admit it. Her ill-humor increased, and she remarked, in a somewhat sharp tone, to poor Andres:

“If your doctor has not forbidden you to speak, tell us a little about your adventure; for we have but a confused knowledge of the affair.”

“Ha! make an effort to tell us the romantic story,” chimed in the Englishman.

“You want to make him chatter, and yet you see well enough that he is still very weak,” interposed Geronimo, with paternal good-nature.

"That will not tire him very much, and, if need be, the señorita will come to his aid; she must know all the details."

Thus invited, Militona drew near the group.

"I was seized with the whim," said Andres, "to disguise myself as a *manolo*, in order to take a run through the old quarters, and enjoy the lively scenes presented by the wine-shops and popular balls; for you know, Feliciano, that, while I admire civilization, I like the old Spanish customs. Passing through this street, I met a savage serenader, who fastened a quarrel on me, and wounded me in a knife-combat, but honorably, and within the rules governing such encounters. I fell, and the señorita picked me up half-dead in the doorway of her house."

"Why, Andres, don't you see how romantic that is, and that it would make an admirable plaintive ballad, with the aid of a little poetry? Two furious rivals meet under a beauty's balcony——" As she said this, she looked at Militona and smiled with a forced, malicious expression. "They break their guitars over each other's head, and trace crosses on each other's faces. This scene, engraved on wood, and placed at the head of a ballad, would have a splendid effect; it would make a fortune for a blind man."

"Señora, two inches lower down, and the blade would have penetrated his heart," said Militona seriously.

"Certainly; but as always happens, it glanced off so as to cause only an interesting wound——"

"Which hardly interests you, at any rate," interrupted the young girl.

"It was not received in honor of me, and I cannot take so keen an interest in it as you ; however, you see that I come to visit your invalid. If you wish, we will take turns in nursing him ; that would be delightful."

"Hitherto, I have cared for him alone, and I will continue to do so," answered Militona.

"I am conscious that, compared with you, I appear cold ; but I could not reconcile it with my ideas to receive young men into my house, even though they had a slight chest wound."

"Would you have let him die in the street for fear of compromising yourself?"

"Every one does not enjoy the same freedom as you ; there are considerations of conduct to be thought of ; those who enjoy a reputation are not very willing to lose it."

"Nonsense, Feliciana, you are talking stupidly ; you are angry about nothing," observed the conciliatory Geronimo. "All that is the freak of chance ; Andres had never seen the señorita before the accident ; don't let jealousy get the better of you, or become uneasy without the slightest cause."

"A fiancée is not a mistress," Feliciana continued in a majestic tone, without paying heed to her father's interruption.

Militona turned pale at this last insult. A moist gleam shone in her eyes, her bosom heaved, her lips trembled, and a sob was ready to escape, but she stifled it in her throat, and replied only by a glance in which she expressed the most overwhelming contempt.

"Let us go, father, this is no place for me ; I can't stay longer in the house of a wanton."

"If that is all that drives you away, stay, Señorita," said Andres, taking Militona's hand. "Doña Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios may prolong her visit to Señora Andres de Salcedo, whom I present to you; I should be in despair if I caused you to commit an impropriety."

"What!" cried Geronimo, "what's that you say, Andres? And the marriage arranged ten years ago! Are you mad?"

"On the contrary, I am quite rational," the young man responded; "I know that I could not make your daughter happy."

"Chimeras! hare-brained whims! you are sick, in a fever!" Geronimo went on, for he had become habituated to regarding Andres as his son-in-law.

"Ha! don't be uneasy," said the Englishman, pulling Geronimo's sleeve, "you will not be at a loss for a son-in-law. Your daughter is too lovely and dresses too superbly for that."

"Your means were so mutually satisfactory——" pursued Geronimo.

"Better suited than our hearts," Andres replied. "I don't think Señorita Vasquez will suffer much grief in losing me."

"You are modest," Feliciana answered; "but that you may have no remorse, I will leave you that conviction. Adieu! may your domestic life be happy. Señora, I salute you."

Militona returned Feliciana's mocking bow with a most dignified courtesy.

"Come, father;—give me your arm, Sir Edwards."

The islander, at this appeal, gracefully curved his arm like the handle of a vase, and they left the room majestically.

The young Englishman was radiant. This scene had filled his mind with hopes which had hitherto been unable to spread their wings. Feliciana, for whom his heart burned in secret, was free! The marriage, so long contemplated, had just been abandoned: "Oh!" he thought, as he felt the tiny glove of the young girl resting on his sleeve, "to marry a Spaniard was my life-dream! A Spaniard with passionate soul and ardent heart, and who will brew tea as I like it—— I am of Lord Byron's opinion: away, ye pale Northern beauties; I have vowed that I will marry none but an Indian, an Italian, or a Spaniard. I prefer a Spaniard because of the *romancero* and the War of Independence; I have seen many who were passionate, but they did not brew tea to my liking, and were guilty of shocking improprieties; but Feliciana is so well bred! What a sensation she will create in London, at Almack's, and at the fashionable routs! No one will believe that she is from Madrid. Oh! how happy I shall be! We will spend the summers with our little family at Calcutta or at the Cape of Good Hope, where I have a cottage. What joy!"

Such were the golden day-dreams that occupied Sir Edwards's thoughts as he escorted Feliciana to her home.

Feliciana, on her side, abandoned herself to similar musing; no doubt she felt keenly angered at the scene that had just taken place,—not that she very much regretted losing Andres, but she was piqued at having been forestalled. It is always a very disagreeable thing to be given up by a man, even if one does not care much for him; but since she had made the acquaintance of Sir Edwards, Feliciana had looked much less favorably on her engagement to Andres.

Her meeting with her ideal in the person of Sir Edwards had opened her mind to the fact that she had never loved Andres.

Sir Edwards was so entirely the Englishman of her dreams ! the clean-shaved, pink-faced, sleek, well-groomed, and powdered Englishman, in white cravat from early morn, and English waterproof and mackintosh ! the highest expression of civilization !

Then, too, he was so prompt, so precise, so mathematically punctual in keeping an appointment. He would have served as a standard for the most regular chronometers.

“What a happy life a woman would lead with such a man !” said Señorita Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios to herself ; “I should have English silverware, Wedgwood porcelain, carpets all over the house, powdered lackeys ; I should go driving in Hyde Park seated by my husband, as he tooled his four-in-hand. In the evenings, I should hear Italian music as I sat in my yellow damask-draped box at the Queen’s Theatre. Tame deer would sport on the greensward at my castle, and possibly, too, some fair pink children : children look so becoming seated on the front of a calèche beside a genuine King Charles spaniel !”

We will leave these two perfectly-matched persons to continue their way, and return to seek Andres and Militona in Calle del Povar.

As soon as Feliciano, Don Geronimo, and Sir Edwards had left, Militona threw her arms around Andres’s neck, and burst into tears and sobs ; but they were tears of joy and happiness that gently trickled down her cheeks in transparent pearls, without reddening her divinely lovely eyes.

The day was declining, the light, rosy clouds were dappling the western sky. The humming of the guitar, the buzzing of the timbrel at the touch of the dancers' thumbs, the quivering jingles of the tambourines, the clacking of the castanets, were heard in the distance. The ays! and olas! accompanying the fandango burst forth in harmonious puffs, as it were, from the street-corners and squares, and all these joyful and national sounds united to form a sort of epithalamium in honor of the two lovers. Night had fallen, and Militona's head was still resting on Andres's shoulder.

## X

We have lost sight of our friend Juancho for a short space. It will be well to seek him, for he left Militona's chamber in a state of exasperated frenzy that was near to madness. Growling curses and indulging in wild gestures, he reached the Puerta de Hierro without knowing where he was going, his chance steps having led him toward the country.

The environs of Madrid are arid and desolate, the walls of the wretched hovels sparsely scattered along the roads are earth-colored; these places were used for the questionable and undesirable occupations which the great cities banish from their midst. These barren spots were dotted with bluish stones which increased in size as one drew closer to the base of the Sierra de Guadarrama, whose peaks, still covered with a film of snow at the beginning of summer, stood out on the horizon like groups of little white clouds. Here and there,



a few traces of vegetation could be indistinctly seen. The course of the torrent, now dry, was marked by terrible fissures in the soil ; the slopes and hills were verdureless, and formed a landscape in perfect harmony with every melancholy sentiment. Gaiety would perish there, but despair found nothing to mock at it, at least.

After an hour or two's walk, Juancho, crushed by the burden of his thoughts,—he who would not have stooped beneath the weight of the gates of Gaza that Samson carried away,—fell flat on his face at the side of a ditch, leaned on his elbows, propped his head with his hands, and remained thus, motionless, in utter prostration.

He saw, without remarking them, the oxen file past, dragging heavy wagons, and the sight of his body stretched out by the roadside frightened the poor beasts, who turned aside as they passed him, bringing on them a thrust of the goad from their drivers ; the asses carrying bundles of chaff bound with withes ; the peasant with the features of a brigand, proudly seated on his horse, his hand on his thigh, and his rifle at his saddle-bow ; the peasant-woman with a sullen look, dragging her crying brat after her ; the old Castilian with his wolf-skin cap ; the Manchegan with his black breeches and woolen stockings, and all that company of wanderers who carry three green apples or a box of pimento to the market from a distance of ten leagues,—he saw them all.

He suffered terribly, and tears, perhaps the first he had ever wept, trickled over his brown cheeks, and fell on the insensible earth, which imbibed them as if they were but ordinary drops of rain. His muscular chest, heaving with deep sighs,

lifted his whole body. Never had he been so wretched before; the end of the world seemed to him to be near; he neither saw the purpose of the creation nor of life. Henceforth, what could he do?

“She does not love me, she loves another,” Juancho repeated to himself, so that he might establish the fatal truth that his heart refused to believe. “Is it possible? Can it be true? And she so haughty, so shy, to have been seized with a passion for a stranger, while I, who have been like her shadow for two years, could not get a word of pity, a compassionate smile! I thought myself worthy of pity then, but that was paradise compared with my sufferings to-day. If she did not love me, at least she did not bestow her affection on another.

“I could see her then; she told me to begone, not to see her again, that I caused her *ennui*, wearied her, pestered her, and that she could not bear my tyranny any longer; but when I left her, she was alone, at least; at night, I wandered beneath her window, mad with love and intoxicated with desire; I knew that she reposed chastely on her little virginal bed; I had no fear of seeing two shadows cast upon her curtain; unhappy that I was, I yet knew the bitter joy that no one was better off than I. I did not possess the treasure, but at any rate no other held the key.

“Now it is all over, hope has vanished; if she repulsed me when she was not in love with another, how much greater will her repugnance be now when all her sympathy goes out to another? Oh! I knew it too well! Hence it was that I kept away every one who might be attracted by her beauty; how

I kept watch over her! Poor Luca and poor Gines, how I disposed of them, and all for naught; and I have allowed the other to escape, the true, the dangerous lover, the one who should have been killed! Clumsy hand, idiotic slave that knew not how to perform thy duty, receive thy punishment!"

As he said this, Juancho bit his right hand so severely that he almost drew blood.

"When he is cured, I will again raise a quarrel with him, and I will not fail then. But if I kill him, Militona will never wish to see me again; in any case, she is lost to me. It will drive me mad; there is no other course open. If he would but die naturally by some sudden catastrophe,—a fire, the house tumbling down, an earthquake, or even a plague! But I shall never enjoy that good fortune. Demons and furies! When I think that that charming soul, that most perfect form, those lovely eyes, that divine smile, that round and supple neck, that slender waist, and that tiny foot, that all are his! He may take her hand and she will not withdraw it; draw her adored head toward him and she will not turn aside disdainfully. What is my crime that I should be so punished? There are many lovely girls in Spain who would ask no greater pleasure than to see me at their feet! When I enter the arena, more than one heart flutters below a lovely throat; more than one white hand waves me a friendly salute. How many fair ones of Seville, Madrid, and Granada have thrown me their fans, handkerchiefs, the flowers from their head-dresses, and golden chains from their necks, carried away with admiration of my bravery and fine appearance! Well! I have despised them; I have desired only her who would

not have me ; among these many loves, I have chosen only a hate ! Unconquerable attraction ! Fatal destiny ! Poor Rosaura, you who held me in such tender regard to which I gave no return, madman that I was, how you must have suffered ! No doubt I am bearing to-day the burden of the grief I caused you. The world is badly ordered : it should have been ordained that every love should give birth to its fellow ; then such despair would not be experienced. God is unkind ! Perhaps I am suffering this affliction for not having had tapers burned before the image of Our Lady. Ah ! my God ! my God ! what can I do ? Never shall I enjoy another moment of calm on earth ! Happy Dominguez to have been killed by the bull, Dominguez who also loved Militona ! I did all I could, however, to save him ! And yet she accused me of having abandoned him in the moment of danger ! for not only does she hate me, but she despises me also. O Heaven ! it is enough to drive me mad with rage ! ”

As he uttered these thoughts, he rose at a bound and resumed his journey across the fields.

He wandered about the whole day with mind distraught, haggard eye, and clenched fists ; cruel hallucinations presented Andres and Militona walking together hand in hand, in tender embrace, gazing languishingly at each other, in all the most bitter situations for a jealous heart ! All these scenes appeared in such keen colors, and stamped with so distinct a reality, that he more than once dashed forward as if to stab Andres ; but he struck only the air, and reawakened altogether astonished at his vision.

## Chapter X

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*Juancho approached, and, without saying a word, set about putting the cart in place; but his hands trembled, his legs tottered, and his hitherto unconquered muscles did not answer to the call.*









The forms of objects grew confused to his sight ; he felt his temples, as it were, in a closed vise ; his head was grasped as by an iron band ; his eyes burned, and although the sweat trickled over his face, and despite the rays of a June sun, he was cold.

A drover, whose cart had upset in passing over a huge stone, tapped him on the shoulder, and said :

“You seem to have strong arms, man ; will you help me to right my cart ? My poor animals have worn themselves out without success.”

Juancho approached, and, without saying a word, set about putting the cart in place ; but his hands trembled, his legs tottered, and his hitherto unconquered muscles did not answer to the call. He raised the cart a little, but, exhausted and heartless, he let it fall again.

“I should have thought your fists were stronger than that,” said the drover, who was surprised at Juancho’s ineffectual efforts.

His strength was gone, he was sick.

Stung by the drover’s remark, and, like the gladiator he was, vain of his muscular power, he asserted, by a violent effort of will, all his remaining strength in a furious attempt.

The cart was set on its wheels as if by enchantment, without the drover’s having put a hand to it. The jerk had been so violent that the vehicle had almost been thrown over on the other side.

“How you go at it, master !” cried the wondering drover ; “since the Hercules of Ocaña, who carried away the window-gratings, and Bernardo del Carpio, who stopped the windmills

with his finger, such a fine fellow as you has not been seen."

Juancho made no reply, but fell in a swoon beside the road, like a dead man falls, to make use of the Dantesque style.

"Can he have burst some blood-vessel?" asked the terrified drover. "Never mind, since the accident has resulted from his service in my behalf, I will carry him on my cart and set him down at San Agustin, or at Alcobendas, in some ale-house."

Juancho's swoon lasted but a short time, although neither salts nor spirits were used to restore him, such articles not being generally possessed by drovers;—but the toreador was not a delicate lady.

The drover threw his cloak over him: Juancho was in a fever, and he experienced a feeling hitherto unknown to his iron frame,—sickness.

When the *posada* at San Agustin was reached, he asked for a bed and lay down.

His sleep was heavy, the invincible sleep that overcomes Indian prisoners amid the tortures which the ingenious cruelty of their conquerors inflicts, or that which is experienced on the morning of their execution by men condemned to death.

The shattered organs of the body refused to give the soul the means of suffering.

Twelve hours of oblivion saved Juancho from madness; he rose free from fever and headache, but as feeble as if he were convalescing after a six months' illness. The ground seemed to slip from under him, the light confused his sight, the slightest sound made him dizzy; his mind seemed void and his

soul empty. All within him had crumbled away. Where his love had formerly filled all, there was now a gulf that nothing henceforth could fill.

He remained in the inn one day, and feeling better, for his energetic nature resumed its sway, he ordered a horse and retraced his course to Madrid, called thither by that strange instinct that leads one back to the scenes of sorrow: he felt the need of pouring poison into his wounds, of enlarging them, and himself turning round his knife in his heart; he was too distant from the source of his misfortune: he would draw near to it, carry his martyrdom to its limits, intoxicate himself with his absinthe, and blot out the memory of the cause of his woe by the excess of his suffering.

While Juancho pondered over his grief, the alguazils were seeking him everywhere, for public opinion pointed to him as the one who had stabbed Signor Andres de Salcedo. The latter, as may well be supposed, had made no complaint; it was quite enough to have taken from poor Juancho her whom he loved, without further depriving him of his liberty; Andres was even ignorant of the fact that the toreador was being pursued.

Argamasilla and Covachuelo, the Orestes and Pylades of arrests, had gone into the country to discover and take Juancho; but they proceeded very circumspectly, in view of the notoriously savage character of the fellow; it might be thought—and envious persons who were jealous of the reputation of the two friends loudly proclaimed it—that Covachuelo and Argamasilla made such inquiries as would enable them to avoid meeting him they were charged to arrest; but

an unskilful spy had stated that the accused had been seen to enter the Plaza de los Toros, looking as calm as if he had nothing on his conscience.

The thing must be done. As they walked toward the place indicated, Argamasilla said to his friend :

"I beg you as a favor, Covachuelo, not to act imprudently; keep your heroism within bounds; you know that the rascal is quick-handed; do not expose to the fury of a brute the skin of the greatest officer of police that ever existed."

"Be easy," answered Covachuelo. "I will use my best endeavors to preserve your friend for you. I will be brave only in case of extreme urgency, when I have exhausted all parliamentary expedients."

Juancho had, in fact, entered the Circo to see the bulls that were being shut up preparatory to the next day's course, rather from force of habit than any predetermined plan.

He was still there and was crossing the arena when Argamasilla and Covachuelo arrived, followed by their little squad.

Covachuelo intimated to Juancho, in the most polite and formal manner, that it was his duty to escort him to prison.

Juancho shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and went on his way.

At a sign from the alguazil, two officers fell on the toreador, who shook them off as if they were a grain of dust that had fallen on his sleeve.

The whole party then rushed on Juancho, who sent three or four of them rolling away fifteen paces off, feet in air; but, as numbers always end by overcoming individual strength,

and a hundred pygmies can give a good account of a giant, Juancho, with a roar, gradually drew near the *toril*, and there, with a sudden jerk, shaking himself free from the hands that clung to his clothes, he opened the door, rushed into the dangerous haven, and shut himself in, much in the same way as that beast-tamer who, hunted by sheriff's officers, took refuge in the tigers' cage.

The attacking party endeavored to force an entry into this retreat, but the door that they tried to break open was suddenly thrown down, and a bull that Juancho had driven out of his stall rushed with lowered head upon the terrified band.

The poor devils had just time enough to leap over the barriers: one of them, indeed, did not escape without a rent in his trousers.

"The deuce!" exclaimed both Argamasilla and Covachuelo, "this will be a regular siege. Let us try a new attack."

This time, two bulls appeared together and rushed on the assailants; but as the latter scattered with the nimbleness born of fear, the savage brutes, no longer seeing human antagonists, turned against each other, clashed their horns, and, with muzzles in the sand, made the most prodigious efforts to bring each other down.

Covachuelo called out to Juancho, cautiously holding the leaf of the door the while:

"Comrade, you still have five bulls to let loose: we know your supply. After that, you must give in, and capitulate without conditions. Come out of your own free will, and I will escort you to jail with all possible consideration, without handcuffs or thumb-manacles, in a *calesin*, at your expense,

and further, I will make no mention in the report of the resistance you have offered to the authorized officers, which would aggravate your offence ; am I not considerate ? ”

Juancho was not disposed to contend longer for the liberty which he esteemed lightly, and surrendered to Armagasilla and Covachuelo, who conducted him to the city jail with all the honors of war.

When the creaking of the keys in the locks had ceased, Juancho threw himself on his pallet, and said to himself : “ Had I but killed her ! ” forgetful that he was in jail. “ Yes, that is what I should have done on the day I found Andres with her. My vengeance would then have been complete ; oh ! what bitter agony he would have suffered in seeing his mistress poniarded before his eyes ; weak, helpless in bed, he could not have defended her ; for I would not have killed him ! I would not have committed that blunder ! I should have fled to the mountains, or given myself up to justice. I should now be tranquil, one way or another. For me to live, she must die ; if she live, I must die. I had my *navaja* in my hand : one blow and all would have been over ; but there was such a terrible gleam in her eyes, she was so despairingly lovely, that strength, will, and courage failed me,—me, whose glance at the lions in their cages suffices to compel them to close their eyes, and to make the bulls crawl on their bellies like beaten dogs.

“ What ! I rend her lovely bosom ! I cause her to feel the cold steel in her heart, and make her bright blood course over her white body ! Oh ! no, I could not commit such an act of barbarity. It would have been better to smother her with



her pillow, as the Moor does to the young Venetian lady in the play I saw in the Teatro del Circo. However, she has not deceived me, she has not sworn falsely to me; she has always been desperately cold toward me. It is all the same, I love her dearly enough to have the right of death over her!"

Such were, with slight variations, the ideas which Juancho entertained in his cell.

Andres was recovering rapidly; he had left his bed, and, leaning on Militona's arm, could make the circuit of the chamber and breathe the air at the window; his strength would soon permit him to go down into the street and to his home in order to make the necessary arrangements for his early marriage.

Sir Edwards, too, had declared his affection, and with the usual formalities had asked the hand of Feliciana Vasquez de los Rios; Don Geronimo assented eagerly. He was busily occupied with the wedding-presents, and ordered from London gowns and other finery of fabulous richness and extravagant style. The cashmeres selected ranged through shades of jonquil, scarlet, and apple-green, and would have been beyond the reach of Monsieur Biétry. They had been imported from Lahore, the shawl metropolis, by Sir Edwards himself, who possessed one or two farms in the neighborhood of that city; they were made from the wool of his own goats; Felician's soul was swimming in a sea of the purest joy.

Militona, although very happy also, was not free from dread; she was afraid of being out of place in the society to which her marriage with Andres would soon introduce her.

In her, a boarding-school mistress had not destroyed the work of God, and education taken the place of intuition; she possessed the sentiment of the good and the beautiful, of all the poetry of art and nature, but naught but the sentiment. Her pretty hands had never fingered the ivory keys; she had never attempted the study of music, although she sang in a pure and correct voice; her literary acquaintance was limited to a few romances, and if she made no errors in writing, that fact was due to the simplicity of the Spanish orthography.

"Oh!" she said to herself, "I do not wish Andres to blush for me. I will study, learn, and make myself worthy of him. Beauty I must believe I possess, his eyes tell me so; as to gowns, I have made enough to know how to wear them quite as well as the fine dames. We will go to some quiet spot where we can remain until the poor chrysalis has had time to spread her wings and change into a butterfly. Oh! that no misfortune may arise; this too blue heaven alarms me. And then, what has become of Juancho? Will he not make some rash attempt?"

"As to that, no," said the old Aldonza in reply to this latter remark, which Militona had uttered aloud. "Juancho is in jail, confined on the charge of murderously attacking Señor de Salcedo, and, having regard to his reputation, the business may turn out badly for him."

"Poor Juancho! I pity him now. But for Andres's love, I should be very unhappy."

Juancho's trial took a very serious turn. The prosecuting attorney represented the nocturnal combat as an ambush and a case of homicide, and the failure to kill as being altogether

contrary to Juancho's intention. Thus considered, the business assumed a serious aspect.

Fortunately, Andres succeeded, by his explanations and the efforts he made, in modifying the offence of attempted assassination to that of a common duel, with other weapons, it is true, than those used by gentlemen, but which he could accept, as he understood their use. Besides, the wound had not been a serious one, and it had entirely healed, and he was in some degree the first offender in this quarrel. The result had been too fortunate to esteem it dearly paid for by a scratch.

A charge of assassination, the victim of which had recovered and pleaded his murderer's cause, could not be maintained long, even by the public prosecutor the most thirsty for public vengeance.

Juancho was therefore released after a short time, regretting that he owed his liberty to the man he most hated, and from whom he would not have willingly accepted a service at any cost.

On leaving the prison, he said gloomily :

"Now I am miserably bound by this act of kindness. I must hold this man's life sacred, or I am an infamous coward. Oh ! I would have preferred to go to the galleys ; in ten years I should have returned and have avenged my wrong."

From that day, Juancho disappeared. Some persons asserted that they had seen him galloping in the direction of Andalusia on his black horse. As a matter of fact, he was never seen again in Madrid.

Militona breathed more freely ; she knew Juancho well enough to fear nothing more from him.

The two marriages were consummated at the same time and in the same church. Militona had desired to make her own wedding-gown: it was her masterpiece; one would say it was made from the leaves of lilies; it was so well made that no one noticed it.

Feliciana's toilet was extravagantly magnificent.

On leaving the church, every one remarked apropos of Feliciana: "What a lovely gown!" and of Militona: "What a charming person!"

## XI

Not far from the old convent of Santo Domingo, in the district of Antequerula de Granada, on the slope of the hill stands a house remarkable for its dazzling whiteness, shining like a block of silver amid the dark-green trees by which it is surrounded.

From the garden-walls, as it were from an overflowing urn, fall in wild profusion garlands of vine-branches and other climbing plants that hang in large masses along the side facing the street.

Through the grating of the door, at the first glance, one sees a sort of peristyle, decorated with a mosaic of multicolored pebbles, then an interior court,—a *patio*, to use the correct term,—evidently of Moorish style.

This *patio* was enclosed by slender white columns formed from single blocks of marble, most elegantly proportioned, with capitals of a capricious Corinthian style, bearing inscriptions

in florid Arabian characters intermingled with their volutes, and still bearing some traces of gilding.

Upon these capitals rested heart-shaped arches, similar to those of the Alhambra, forming a covered gallery all round the court.

In the centre was a basin surrounded with vases containing flowers and shrubs in boxes, and a slender fountain played therein, covering the glossy leaves with liquid pearls, and seeming to whisper with its crystal voice some amorous secret in the ears of the myrtles and oleanders.

A *tendido* of canvas extended over the *patio*, and formed, as it were, an outer salon, which was filled with subdued light and delicious freshness.

A guitar was suspended on the wall, and a large straw hat, trimmed with green ribbon, was lying on a horse-hair sofa.

Any one who passed through the street and cast a glance within this place, however careless an observer he might be, must have said: "Happy people dwell there!" Happiness sheds its rays over houses and gives them a characteristic appearance peculiarly their own. Even the walls know how to smile and weep; they are cheerful, or manifest *ennui*; they are surly or hospitable, according to the dispositions of the occupants, who are, so to speak, their souls: those in question could have only young lovers or a newly-wedded couple as the source of their inspiration.

As the grating is not fastened, let us open it, and penetrate into the interior.

At the end of the *patio*, another door, likewise open, admits us to a garden which in style is neither French nor English,

and whose type is limited to Granada ; a veritable forest of myrtles, orange-trees, pomegranates, oleanders, Spanish jasmine, pistachias, sycamores, turpentine-trees, above which some secular cypresses raise their silent tops toward the blue heavens, like some melancholy thought intruding itself in a moment of joy.

Through this labyrinth of flowers and perfume darted, like some silvery rocket, the waters of the Darro brought from the mountain summit by some wonderful hydraulic system carried out by the Arabs.

Rare plants bloomed like spreading sheaves in old Moorish vases with open-work handles and graceful, slender contours, and ornamented with verses from the Koran.

But the most remarkable feature was an alley of laurels with glossy trunks and metallic-looking leaves, within which were placed two benches with backs and seats of marble, and along its course two streams of sparkling water flowed in an alabaster channel.

At the end of this alley, on whose path the generous sun of Andalusia could hardly scatter a few golden rays, so thick was the woven net-work of leaves, rose a small, elegantly designed structure, a sort of pavilion, called in Granada *tocador* or *mirador*, from which an extensive and picturesque view was gained.

The interior of the *mirador* was a gem of Moorish carving. The ceiling was of the style called by Spaniards *media-naranja* (demi-orange), and presented so bewildering a maze of arabesques and ornaments that it seemed to be a coral structure or a honeycomb rather than the work of patient human

laborers ; only crystal grottoes could equal the profusion of sculptured stalactites here presented.

At the back, framed by a marble-cased window, which overlooked a chasm, shone in sparkling splendor the most beautiful picture ever presented to the human eye.

In the foreground, through an extensive grove of huge laurels, amid rocks of marble and porphyry, bounded the Genil on its course from the Sierra, hurrying on to reach Granada and the Darro ; beyond spread out the rich Vega, with its wealth of vegetation, and entirely in the background, but so near that they seemed almost within touch, rose the mountains of the Sierra Nevada.

The sun was sinking at this moment and tinting its snowy peaks with a rose flush to which nothing can be compared : a fresh and soft rose, luminous and brilliant, an ideal rose, divine, and of a tint nowhere to be found, save in Paradise or Granada ; a virginal rose listening to the first confession of love.

A young man and a young woman were leaning against each other on the balcony, whence they were admiring this sublime spectacle : the young man's arm encircled his companion's waist in all the chaste freedom of mutual love.

After contemplating the scene for a few moments in silence, the young woman stood erect and allowed a glimpse of her lovely face, which, as our readers will doubtless have surmised, was no other than that of Señora Andres de Salcedo, or, if it please them better, Militona, the name with which they have been longer acquainted.

It is needless to say that the young man was Andres.



Immediately after the marriage was concluded, Andres and his wife set out for Granada, where he had inherited a house from one of his uncles. Feliciana had accompanied Sir Edwards to London. Both couples had followed their instincts: the first sought sunshine and poetic associations; the second, civilization and fog.

As she had declared, Militona did not wish to enter at once into society,—in which her marriage to Andres would have given her rank as of right; she feared that she might cause Andres to blush for some charming display of ignorance; and to that happy retreat she had come to forget the artless surprises that her familiarity with poverty would bring her.

She had surprisingly improved both physically and intellectually. Her beauty, which might have been deemed perfect before, had been intensified. It happens sometimes that one sees in the atelier of a great sculptor an admirable statue that is to all appearance finished; but no, the artist's skill can yet add some new charms to that which one thought perfect.

Thus it was with Militona's beauty; happiness had given her the finishing touches; a thousand charming details had become deliciously exquisite through the care and the refining influences that fortune permitted. Her purely-shaped hands had become white; the sunken lines due to work and the anxiety of the morrow had all been banished. The outlines of her lovely form assumed a softer grace with the assured position of a wife and a wealthy woman. Her happy nature expanded in full freedom and shed its blossoms, perfume, and fruit about her; her virgin intellect readily received impressions and assimilated them with extreme ease. Andres

delighted at seeing born, so to speak, in the woman he loved, a woman superior to the first.

Instead of the disenchantment that follows possession, he discovered each day a new quality, an unknown charm, in Señora de Salcedo, and he congratulated himself for his courage in committing what the world calls a folly,—that is to say, that, being rich, he had married a virtuous young girl who was amazingly beautiful and passionately enamored of him.

Ought not men of fortune to regard it as a duty to withdraw from obscurity and want the lovely and virtuous maidens, queens without kingdoms, and place them on the golden thrones that should be theirs?

Nothing was lacking to complete the felicity of Andres and Militona. Still, she sometimes thought of poor Juancho, of whom no one had heard a word; she would have desired that her happiness should not be obtained at the cost of any one's despair, and the thought of the suffering of this unhappy man disturbed her now in the midst of her joy. "He has doubtless forgotten me," she said to herself, in order to calm her regret; "he has gone to some strange land, far, far away."

Had Juancho forgotten Militona? It is greatly to be doubted. He was not so far away as she fancied; for at the moment when this thought possessed her mind, if she could have seen the top of the wall overhanging the chasm, she would have observed through the thick foliage a fixed, gleaming eye, luminous as that of a tiger, which she might have recognized by its brilliancy.

"Would you like to take our walk to the Generalife?" Andres asked Señora de Salcedo, "to inhale the pungent

odor of the oleanders and listen to the screaming of the peacocks among the cypresses of Zoraida and *Chaine-des-Cœurs*?"

"It is still very warm, dear, and I am not dressed for a promenade," the young wife replied.

"What! why you look charming in your white gown, coral bracelet, and the pomegranate blossom that sparkles at your ear. Throw a mantilla over your dress and your appearance in crossing the Alhambra would bring the Moorish kings to life."

Militona smiled, arranged the folds of her mantilla, took her fan, the inseparable companion of Spanish women, and the couple directed their steps toward the Generalife, situated, as every one knows, upon an eminence separated from that crowned by the red towers of the Alhambra by a ravine, the most picturesque spot imaginable, through which winds a path bordered with the most luxuriant vegetation, and along which we will proceed a few yards in front of the husband and wife, who take their way slowly beneath the leafy vault, holding each other's hand and swinging their arms like children at play.

But behind that fig-tree yonder, whose dark-green leaves look like night's darkness falling on the narrowing path, it seems to us that we saw the barrel of a fire-arm glisten or the gleam of a brass blunderbuss that was lowered. Is it a mistaken idea?

Among the azaroles and mastic-trees a man is lying flat on the ground, like a jaguar in wait for his prey; he mentally measures the leap that he must make to fall on his victim's

shoulders : it is Juancho, who has been living in Granada for two months, hidden in the caves of the troglodytes of the Gitanos, hollowed out of the steep sides of Monte Sagrado, where the martyrs' caves are. He has grown ten years older in these two months. His complexion has become very dark, his cheeks hollow, his eyes fiery, like a man's consumed by a single thought : that thought was to slay Militona.

Already he would have carried out his determination twenty times, for he was always prowling around her, unseen and unrecognizable, seeking his opportunity ; but his heart failed him at the last moment.

He had remarked that Andres and Militona had passed along this path every day at almost the same hour, and, on reaching his ambush, he had sworn by the most terrible oaths that he would accomplish his deadly purpose and make an end to the matter then and there.

With his loaded weapon beside him, he was there watching, listening for the sound of approaching footsteps, and consoling himself with a supreme justification as well as a final encouragement in the thought :

“She has killed my soul, I may well kill her body !”

The sound of merry and clear voices was heard at the end of the pathway.

Juancho started, and became livid ; then he cocked his blunderbuss.

“Might one not say that this is the way that leads to the terrestrial paradise ?” said Militona to her husband ; “there are nothing but flowers, the songs of birds, and rays—— With such a road before one, one might well be

sorry to reach one's destination, however lovely the spot might be ! ”

As she uttered these words, she was nearing the fatal fig-tree.

“How much good it does one, how fresh it is here ! I feel quite buoyant, entirely happy.”

The mouth of the unseen blunderbuss was pointed directly toward her face, which had never looked more rosy and merry.

“Come, no weakness now ! ” muttered Juancho, as he placed his finger on the trigger. “She is happy, she has just said so ; never was moment more favorable. Let her die with those words on her lips ! ”

It seemed that it was all over with Militona : the mouth of the weapon, hidden by the foliage, almost touched her ear ; another second, and that lovely face had been blown to pieces and all that beauty had been merely a confused mass of blood, flesh, and shattered bones.

At the moment when he was to destroy his idol, Juancho's heart swelled with emotion, a cloud passed before his eyes ; this momentary hesitation vanished like a lightning-flash, but it saved Señora de Salcedo, who never knew the peril that confronted her, and she finished her walk to the Generalife in a state of the most perfect tranquillity of mind.

“Assuredly, I am a coward,” said Juancho, as he fled through the underbrush ; “I have no courage except in face of bulls and men.”

A short time passed, and the fame was bruited about of a torero who performed prodigies of skill and valor ; never

had such boldness been seen: he reported himself as from Lima, in South America, and at this moment he was giving exhibitions at Puerto de Santa Maria.

Andres, who happened to be with his wife at Cadiz, whither he had journeyed to bid adieu to a friend who was leaving for Manila, had the natural wish of an aficionado to see this tauromachic hero; Militona, although of a sweet and sensitive character, was not the woman to refuse to countenance such a desire, and they went to the wharf to embark on the steamboat that made the trip from Cadiz to Puerto, or, failing that, on one of the small boats bearing an open eye painted on each side of the prow, which gives it the appearance of a human face of most singular aspect.

The harbor was alive with bustle and movement; the skippers of the vessels seized upon customers, alternately flattering and threatening; a running fire of cries, oaths, and jests was kept up, and at every moment a skiff spread its lateen sail to the breeze and was carried off like a swan's wing on the blue waters of the roadstead.

On the poop of one of these boats, Andres and Militona took places, and as the skipper offered his elbow to the young woman to help her aboard his skiff, he hummed gaily the line from the song of the bulls of Puerto:

“Slightly lift that pretty foot!”

Cadiz looks lovely from the sea, and fully deserves the praises voiced by Byron in his strophes. One would say it was a silver city set between two sapphire domes: it is the home of lovely women, and it is no slight praise of Militona

to say that she was looked after and followed on the Alameda by many eager eyes.

She was, indeed, lovely to adoration in her white lace mantilla, a rose in her hair, a neckerchief fastened at the shoulders by two cameos, her corsage trimmed with lace and fringe at the wrists and shoulders, her skirt with ample flounces, her open-work stockings, finer than a spider's web and concealing a limb exquisitely turned; her pretty satin slippers encasing the most delicate foot in the world, of which one might speak in the language of the Spanish song: "If the leg is a reality, the foot is an illusion."

With her change of fortune, Militona had preserved her love for Spanish fashions and customs; she had not assumed French or English styles, and, although she might have hats as pronouncedly sulphur-colored as any in the Peninsula, she did not abuse this liberty. The costume that has just been described shows that she troubled herself very little about the fashions of Paris.

The people of this city, clothed in brilliant colors,—for black had not entirely taken possession of the Andalusians,—who swarmed on the square or sat at the tables of Vista Alegre inn and in the taverns near, while waiting for the bull fête, presented a most merry and animated scene.

With the mantillas were mixed handsome scarlet shawls worn about the head and becomingly framing the ivory-white faces of the women of Puerta de Santa Maria and Xeres de la Frontera. The *majos*, each with his handkerchief hanging out of the front pocket of his jacket, strutted about and posed as they leaned on their varas—a kind of forked cane—or



uttered some swaggering phrases in their peculiar *patois* in which few consonants are employed.

The hour for the bull-fight was close at hand, and everybody directed his course toward the square, the conversation being confined to the wonderful exploits of the torero, who, if he were not suddenly spitted, would not fail to eclipse the great Montès, for he most assuredly had all the devils in his body.

Andres and Militona took their seats in their box, and the spectacle began.

The famous torero was dressed in black; his jacket, covered with jet and silk ornaments, had a sombre richness that harmonized perfectly with the wild and almost sinister expression of the wearer; a yellow sash encircled his thin waist; this exterior covered nothing but muscles and bones.

His dark countenance was furrowed by two or three wrinkles, traced by the keen edge of care rather than the ploughshare of time; for, although youth had vanished from this face, ripe age had not yet set its seal thereon.

The face and figure were not unfamiliar to Andres; he could not, however, clearly recall them.

Militona had not an instant's doubt. Despite his altered appearance, she recognized Juancho at once.

She was terrified at the vast change effected in him in so short a time, revealing what a terrible passion had ravaged this man of bronze and steel.

She hurriedly opened her fan to conceal her face, and leaned back, saying excitedly to Andres: "It is Juancho!"

She had moved too late; the torero had seen her, and, with a gesture, accorded her a sort of greeting.

"Why, it is Juancho," answered Andres, "the poor devil is greatly changed, he looks ten years older. Ah! he is the new swordsman who is so much spoken of; he has resumed his craft."

"Let us go, dear," Militona said to her husband; "I do not know why, but I feel very uneasy; I fancy some terrible event is about to happen."

"What do you suppose will happen," asked Andres, "unless it be the overthrow of the picadors and the ripping open of the horses?"

"I fear that Juancho will indulge in some extraordinary action, or give way to some furious outbreak."

"You are always troubling about that wretched *navaja* thrust. If you knew Latin,—happily you do not,—I should say that such a thing will not happen again, in view of the law, *non bis in idem*. Besides, this brave fellow has had time to grow calm."

Juancho performed prodigies; he bore himself as if he were invulnerable, like Achilles or Roland; he twisted the bulls' tails and made them dance; he placed his foot between their horns and leaped over them at a bound; he stripped off their devices, stood in front of them, and displayed unexampled boldness in the most dangerous tricks with the cloak.

The people grew wild with enthusiasm and frantically applauded him, asserting that such a spectacle had never been seen since the time of the Cid Campeador.

The troop of toreros, electrified by example, seemed no longer to realize any danger. The picadors advanced to the

centre of the arena ; the banderillos planted their paper decorated darts without a miss. Juancho accurately seconded everybody, skilfully attracting the savage animal and drawing his attack on himself. *A'chulo* had missed his footing and the brute was about to disembowel him, when Juancho drove him back at the peril of his life.

Every thrust he made struck between the animals' shoulders downward and penetrated to the hilt of his sword, and the brutes fell at his feet so nearly dead that the cachetero's services were not required to end their agony with a thrust of his poniard.

"Zounds!" said Andres, "Montès, the Chiclanero, Arjona, Labi, and all the others have to look out for themselves; Juancho will surpass them all, if he has not already done so."

But such a scene was never to occur again; Juancho attained on this occasion the highest reach of his art; he performed such amazing feats as will never again be seen. Militona could not restrain her applause; Andres stamped his feet; the excitement was at its zenith, frantic cries greeted each of the torero's movements.

The sixteenth bull was let loose. Then an extraordinary, unheard-of circumstance transpired; Juancho, after having handled the bull with amazing skill and made some inimitable passes *de muleta*, took his sword, and, instead of plunging it into the animal's neck, as was expected, threw it upward with so much force that it fell pirouetting to the ground twenty paces from him.

"What is he going to do?" was asked on every side. "That is not courage, it is madness! What new trick is

this? Is he going to kill the bull with a tap on the muzzle?"

Juancho cast in the direction of Militona's box a glance in which all his love and suffering were blended, and then stood motionless in front of the bull.

The animal lowered his head. The beast plunged his horn its full length into the man's chest and withdrew it stained with blood to the roots.

A wild cry of horror rose from ten thousand throats.

Militona fell back in her chair, as pale as a dying woman. During that supreme moment she had loved Juancho.

## NOTES TO GERFAU

<sup>1</sup> The Rock of the Ford.

<sup>2</sup> I, too, have studied law.

<sup>3</sup> *Le piquant du poignard*. The pun, execrable as it is, can hardly be reproduced in translation.

<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to render this passage in English in such way as to express the punning meaning of the original, as *gris* in French means *gray* as well as *tipsy*.

<sup>5</sup> The whole proverb is : *Il ne faut point parler de corde dans la maison d'un pendu*.—you must not speak of a rope in the house of a man who has been hanged.

<sup>6</sup> *Parquet sur parquet*. Another play upon words that cannot be satisfactorily rendered in translation : *parquet* means *floor* ; it also means the staff of the prosecuting attorney's office.

<sup>7</sup> *Menus Suffrages*.—short prayers repeated by monks or ultra-devout persons at the end of the office in commemoration of the saints, in the Catholic Church ; figuratively, trivial things, things of little consequence, etc.

<sup>8</sup> The whipper-in cried : "*Un corps ! un corps !*" As the two final letters in the word are silent, Monsieur de Camier misunderstood him. "*Un dix-cors !*" he said ; that is to say, a stag with ten branches on his horns, five on each—hence a full-grown stag.



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